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A Wild Bouquet.

By LEON CLAIRE.

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Because I wish to drown some things—
That waltz about with heavy wings:
Because I love the dreamy skies,
And mellow orange groves and trees,
And scented plains and tropic seas,—
That shine and flash like women's eyes:
That bend the air with fringes deep,
And dance about like sunny spring:
Where perfumed sighs and kisses, keep—
Between the realms of troubled sleep,
A sweet and kindly offering:
That bids my Muse awake and sing.

I blow a kiss across the skies,
A sweet, pure, sacred, holy kiss:
From mountain tops where quiet lies,
And tangled dew-drops lift their eyes—
To rosy stars and purple skies,
Beside a deep and lone abyss.
'Tis blown to one whose eyes of brown—
Soft as the dreamy veil of night,
In waving circles drifting down,
Is never hidden from my sight.
Sweet eyes! pure eyes! that bid me go.
My heart . . . yes, beats . . . though cold as snow.

I give thee all of these wild lines,
This bloom of spice and crude boquet,
Blown from the tinted skies away,
Where roses sleep on dewy vines.
All, all is yours; for you alone,
From my rich land of vine and palm,
Where cloudless skies are ever calm,
And sunbeams press white chiselled stone,
Free from the ragged hand of Vice,
That makes the spot a paradise,
A perfumed dream of life and home:
I toss to you this letter'd tome.

Whitehall. 1873.

A Wild Bouquet

UNDER A BAN.

I bend me low beside the sea,
And pray to Christ most fervently ;
As I have prayed for many days,
Beneath the bent and quiv'ring moon,
In winter's cold and summer's noon,
And 'neath the Day king's yellow blaze.
And watched, ah, yes . . . so wearily—
For sign or hope . . . for anything,
To make my wild heart lighter cling,—
Where floats too much of Memory.
I veil the past . . . the bleeding past ;
Crushed down beneath a coffined lid,
Within its narrow limits hid,

Though shackles bind my heart so fast.

* * * * * *

He was my friend, as kind and true
As any soul that ever drew
The breath of life 'neath sunny skies ;
And gentle as a mother's eyes :
Not tall nor grand, nor very fair,
But still he had that courtly air,
Mixed with a weary sadden'd look,
As though by friends and all forsook,—
That marks a record of despair.
A piercing eye, so black as night :—
A very tiger in the fight,
But gen'rous to a very fault.
No pen, or pencil can exalt
My hero in the eyes of Fame,
To me, a meteor of flame,
A wand'ring star without a name.

A wondrous wealth of silky hair
Cluster'd about a brow so fair.

So full and high, though seamed with care,
And lines that told of wisdom rare ;
Perhaps of suff'ring ; maybe love.
Though what it was I never asked,
He held it tightly bound and masked,
True to himself as stars above.
I only know that he is dead,
That I, . . . well, life is nothing now,
Since I gave back a broken vow—
The world seems dripping tears of red.

Perhaps because our hearts were sad,
And the same weary sense of pain
Entered deep into soul and brain,
That we became as brothers are,
True to each one as any star,
That makes the blue of Heav'n glad.
I know that he was strangely lone,
Yet like myself he would not own
But that his heart was light and free ;
Though many questioned carelessly,

And opened wounds that still were fresh :
I knew it by the tight closed lips,
And quiv'ring muscles of the mouth,
Bronzed by the sweet winds of the South,
Where striped birds soft perfume sips
From roses colored pale as flesh.

For years we knew each other well :
Though twice my age he clung to me
As hollows to the tossing sea,
Or breakers 'neath the ocean's swell.

One noon beneath the burning sun,
With blinded eyes set to the sea,
And face as white as marbled stone,
He gave a package unto me,
Crossed deep with letters pressed thereon ;
He clasped my hand, then turned away,
Walked out upon the belted sands —
Straight as a pine, with folded hands,
How grand he looked that sad, sad day.

Well, he died bravely,—died alone,
As any brave, true soldier must ;
A flash, a pall, head bowed in dust,
The truest friend I had was gone.
Hope well who may, hope well who can,
It is but frail, I grant you this ;
Sometimes a poisoned adder's kiss,
Lured by the cruel smiles of man ;
A deadly, sick'ning sense of woe,
That only those who feel can know.

I knelt me low beside his grave
One midnight when the skies were blue,
With sad, pale lips, and heavy eyes,
And wondered why this sacrifice,
In one, to me, so very true,
Yet troubled as the hollowed wave.
I knew not that one friend he had,
Though there were some when fortune smiled,
By that false star too soon beguiled,
Became a brief time reconciled.

But when it fled—yes, that was bad,—
They proved naught but as summer friends
On purpose to achieve their ends,
And left him weary and heart sad ;
But I was true, and by his grave
That midnight in the month of June,
Beneath the pale and wand'ring moon,
I said some words, and tremb'ling gave,—
Below the soft, sweet, scented skies,
Inwove with bitter memories,
A wreath of roses, white and red,
A tribute to my slumb'ring dead.

As yet I had not broke the seal,
The package he had given me,
That day beside the shining sea,
When all of beauty seemed to reel.
But now, no better time or place
Than this, beside his cover'd face,—
Could I have found, to tear apart
The hidden secret of his heart,

That in these closely written lines,
Seemed weeping red, like Eastern wines.

It was the secret of his life,
That he had carried years and years,
Through many scenes of pain and strife,
And bitter, burning sighs and fears ;
And longings that had never come,
But like the mateless dove, he bore
His heavy cross, and wander'd o'er
The purple seas to find a home.
I broke the seal with tremb'ling hands,
A tress of hair, a pictured face,
So purely sweet, so grandly fair,—
She seemed some habitant of air ;
Or being of immortal race,
That looked at me, bowed in the sands.
I put the two aside, and read
The mystery that bound my dead.

"*Dear Friend*," I read, "you who have been
To me so bravely kind and true,

Through more than one wild, bitter scene,
Enacted 'neath the dome of blue;
Have never asked why I am sad,
Because you knew it gave me pain,
That seared my heart and fired my brain,
And almost drove me frantic,—mad,
I give you this frail space of life,
This chasm that is now bridged o'er,
And wounds that still are fresh and sore
With blasted hopes, cut as by knife;
As on that dark and weary day,
When Hope took wings and flew away,
And left behind the gloom of care,—
The ghastly phantom of despair.

"Love I have seen, have met, have known,
In ev'ry clime, in ev'ry zone,
Beneath the dreamy Southern skies,
And tropic fluttering of eyes,
That gem the bended arch above,
Oh, Christ! that I should ever love!

" Love well who may, love well who must,
Love long, love fervently and trust.
Love is a heav'n to some I ween,
The fairest spot that e'er was seen.
Love is of God, and God is love,
And all that floats the blue above ;
And stars and flow'rs, and gilded streams,
And visions seen but in one's dreams,
And these, and all there was and is,
Of holy love, and faith, are His.

" Let hearts be light and free from care,
Soft as the skies and pure as prayer ;—
Yes, pure as angel's robes of white
Plucked from the brow of silent night,
And wove upon the inner air.
Let hearts love well,—love wisely too
If that can be . . . some loves are *true*,
And others . . . well, it is not much . . .
A little spell of Heav'n, . . . then cast
Upon the world to find at last
. . . No future shelter from pain's touch.

"I would some memories were dead,
Were buried deeper than the grave;
Yes, deep beneath Lethe's cold wave.
But Recollection still is fed
With embers from the bleeding past,
Unrealized, that still must last.

"Love is the full first Spring of life,
Love deeply, truly, that is best;
The Winter comes full soon, and strife
Corrodes some feelings in ones breast,
When red ripe lips with pure desire,
Free from illicit passions fire,
Awakes within each kindred breast,
No feeling save of quiet rest;
When eyes sweet as the early Spring,
Within whose depths lie slumbering
The soul, that beams so purely there,
Soft, mellow as the morning air,
With tender memories inwove,
I grant you then 'tis time to love.

"Oh, troubled seas of midnight gloom,
Where unrequited passions live,
Black as the cruel edge of doom,
And far more truly sensitive:
Why can you not remove the chain
That binds my spirit deep in pain?

* * * * *

"She was to me, yes, grandly pure,
And holy as a mother's kiss:
So rich in loving tenderness,
That I could *anything* endure,
If that might bring her future bliss.
Sacred as words of holy writ,
My soul was all the closer knit:
And I loved her so truly well,
And now . . . . yes, Memory is hell.
She pledged me vows so sacred too,
O Christ, that they should prove untrue!
I had the utmost faith in her,
But broken vows have made me now,
A loveless, weary wanderer,
With heart as icy-cold as snow.

I gave her back her plighted troth,
With marble lips and freezing heart,
No hope the future to impart,
Still I remember all for both.

* * * * *

" Upon the green sea wave of plains,
Where flow'rs of ev'ry shade and hue,
In perfumed splendor softly reigns—
Beneath the dreamy arch of blue :—
I met a band of brave, true men,
And linked my fortune with them then.
Of almost ev'ry clime and race,
From grizzled beard to boyish face :
Some came from lands beyond the sea,
Where the blue waters of the Rhine,
Dances along like foaming wine,
And some from dreamy Italy.
Some were from sunny France and Spain,
And many sturdy men from Maine :
And from the South, and from the West—
Where Mississippi's muddy tide
Flows slowly on in sullen pride,

Bearing upon its brawny breast
The wealth and beauty of the West.
And some from Cuba's tropic isle
Where cloudless skies are fair and calm,
Where grows the ever verdant palm,
That basks beneath the sun's sweet smile.
Men strong and rugged, brave as steel,
Broad-breasted and with hearts to feel:
And some with passions fierce and strong,
Blended with vice and hidden wrong.

"I knew not whence nor how they came,
I never questioned, never cared,
I only know that I had dared
To follow in their path of flame.
Not long before I heard it told
That they were on a search for gold:
A band of men that had no cares,
Took fate and fortune unawares,
Nor recked not what the morrow's sun
Might bring, nor what might be undone.

With scarce a word save now and then,
When passing through some lonely glen,
They saw a wild and gorgeous scene
Outlined against the waving green :
Or 'round their camp-fires on the grass,
They pledged each other glass on glass,
In kindred spirit, laughed and joked,
And passed their stories while they smoked

"Amid such men I cast my lot,
There was a charm to their wild life,
A charm that I have ne'er forgot
Though passed 'mid scenes of bloody strife :
In time I knew them outcasts,—saw
That I must be beneath the ban ;
So young and yet a proscribed man ;
What cared I if there was a law ?
I have some honor left, and feel
That men who were full true as steel
Deserved to me my comrades, friends,
Though Justice fain would reach her ends.

I bear with them disgrace and shame,
My share of burden and of blame,
Nor seek to shun one single thing
The world against us seeks to bring.

" We rode along 'neath hills of pine,
Like plumes stuck in the cap of earth,
That drank the sun as drinking wine,
Clasped hands and shook with sobbing mirth ;
And trees that blossomed white and red,
And some whose branches long and dead,
Were cover'd thick with hanging moss,
Yellow with age, and linked across,
And flow'rs we crushed beneath our feet,
That breathed an incense oversweet ;
Like to a pure, sweet dream of Heav'n,
Too quickly gone, too quickly riv'n.
And birds with coats of blue and gold,
With sunlight sifting fold on fold,
Darted along in wavy lines
Amid the trailing moss and vines,

And hung high on the boughs o'erhead,
And shook their tufted tops of red.

"For days beneath this surf of green
We watched the changes of each scene;
Of tangled skies with limbs between.
Where the long boa careless wove—
His twisted trail deep in the grove,
Or from the branches crooked hung,
Like lightning shot his forked tongue,
And snapped his eyes, and slowly swung:
Where panthers in their spotted pride
Sprang fiercely from their forest lair,
With blazing eyes and bristling hair,
Lashing their tails from side to side.

"Across a spotted stretch of plain,
Where seas of grass tossed like the main,
Blown into show'rs of flow'ry foam,
Against the blue skies ample dome

I saw a narrow, crooked path :
An op'ning in the rocky chain,
That hung beyond the scented plain,
Kissing the sky in pale white wrath :
A rock-bound canon, grand and wild,
By foot of white man ne'er defiled :
That reared its lips, so far, so high
Into the purple dreamy sky,
They bent the pure kiss of the stars,
And left behind some blinding scars.

" A stream so clear, so pure and deep,
Glided along the rocky bed,
Wedged in by trailing moss and vines,
That closed around like wings of sleep,
Inwove with yellow, green and red,—
Traced on the ground in purple lines.
A stream as silent, still as death ;
Soft as a sleeping infant's breath.
But like a wav'ring arrow sped
Far out to where the muffled call

And music of a waterfall,
Its misty folds of bloom foam spread.
The rocks it wander'd careless through
Were full of sifted, golden sands,
That raised their yellow ghostly hands,
And pleaded with the arch of blue,
That lay like some lost river, hung
Above the mountain's snowy crest,
Where starry islands floating, swung,
And slowly vanished in the West.

" Twelve moons had passed since we came here
And gather'd in this golden cheer :
Twelve moons of hard and sturdy toil
That gave us each a goodly spoil ;
And then we started for the coast,—
So far it seemed, so like a ghost,—
Through orange groves and seas of palm
That whisper'd low some holy psalm,
And bent their fringes to the air :
So sweetly true, so purely fair.

Through gorge and forest, fire and flood,
And sometimes deep in human blood,
Too deep perhaps for future good.

"One night when the dark sable cloud
Hung deeply, blindly, like a shroud
Above the embers of our fires,
And sleep had smother'd all desires,
We were awoke by horrid yells,
And firebrands swung 'tween earth and sky,
Tossed far about like ocean swells,
Or wand'ring meteors on high;
We fought, but vainly fought, for life.
Outnumbered, driven here and there,
Poor bleeding victims of despair,
They fell beneath the scalping knife.

"An arrow struck me in the breast:
I fell and knew no more for hours,
But when I woke, sweet-scented flow'rs

Were swimming 'round the couch I prest ;
And a brown face with eyes of night,
So glorious and purely bright,
Whose depth and purity of soul
No impure passion could control :
Yes, *soul*, that breathing, lent a trace
Of wond'rous beauty to her face.

* * * * * *

"The days went by so carelessly
With song of birds and humming bees,
And mellow cooings of the breeze,
I did not dream that I could be
A prisoner, unbound and free :
Yet under eyes whose sullen glare,
Awoke a feeling, half-despair,
Scatter'd black blossoms on the air,
And waltzed about so fearlessly.

"Deep in the tangled maze we stood
And watched the sunlight, red as blood,
Come dripping through the yellow pines

In long and purple-crested lines :
While at our feet the pale sweet flow'rs
Perfumed the swiftly fleeing hours,
And caught upon their scented breath
The shadows of an early death,
That woke within each velvet sphere
The batter'd fragments of a tear.

" 'See, Heav'n is fair,' Leora said,
'No threat'ning clouds are bent above,
The sea-blue tresses overhead,
Pure as a mother's holy love,
Lie strangely silent, like the dead.'

" She bowed her head and softly sighed,
My peri-pearl, my forest bride :
I drew her closer to my side,
And stroked her hair of midnight pride
With tender touch, and then replied :

" 'Yes, all seems fair to me just now,
For you are here and love is mine :
Still, I recall a broken vow,
And bend me low at Mis'ry's shrine :
But let that pass, my own, my sweet,
Thank fortune that we chanced to meet,
For I have found,—no matter what
My future fate, my future lot, –
The purest, truest, best of all
That ever graced a sylvan hall.'

She gently raised her graceful head,
With pity in her midnight eyes—
Soft, lustrous, full of buried sighs,
And in the sweetest manner said :

" 'Yes, I am yours, and you are mine,
And love has drawn a tender line,
That makes us all in all to each :'
How sweetly pure that little speech.

"The sun went down in seas of red,
By twilight's dagger rudely slain,
And brown ghosts galloped o'er the plain,
Dragging away the Day's white dead ;
And stars were tangled in the trees,
And in the blue bent arch of seas,
While the full moon with stately grace,
Half frightened, showed her milk-white face,
And cast her tresses to the earth
In wild abandon, reckless mirth :
Some stars slid down her golden hair
And vanished in the depths of air :
Fell far beyond the sight of earth,
Beyond the region of their birth,
As I would fall . . . . when free from life,
For pain has cut as with a knife
The purest motives of my breast,
And given me no chance for rest.

* * * * * *

"They came at last, tall, brawny men,
With toughened hands and nerves of steel :
Came from the East through gorge and glen,

And set upon the land their seal.
Rapine and carnage, night and day,
And mangled bodies blocked their way.
They rode beneath the fretted pines,
Rode slowly on, in crooked lines ;
And where the red deer in their pride
Dashed out along the mountain side
With trembling bounds, nor stopped to see
What seemed to them such mystery.

" Between the pale face and the red
There is a never-dying hate,
Born far-a-back, in ages dead,
Linked with the cruel smile of Fate.
The red-men knew that they must go
When came the hated pale-faced foe,
Nor marvelled at their destiny
For that was written in the sky.
They saw the pleasant days go by,
The rise and falling of the sun,
The shadows creeping brown and dun

Across the weary Western sky,
Foretelling them that they must die ;
But still they struggled on and on,
Though victories were seldom won ;
For what could bravery avail
Against a storm of leaden hail
When feather'd flints were all they had ?
Unless they met them hand to hand,
With fire and steel, to countermand
The storm of lead, so seething mad.

" Adopted by this haughty race
Since she became so truly mine,
This princess of a royal line,
So pure of heart, so fair of face ;—
What else could I have asked than this ?
When linked with such true tenderness.
Theirs was the weaker side, and I
Beneath misfortune's icy sky,
Became as red in heart as they,
And mingled fiercely in the fray ;
Fought by their side from day to day.

But slowly, surely, backward pressed,
With scarce one day of peaceful rest
Our bleeding columns wander'd West,
Disputing ev'ry inch of way.

"At length, one day resolved to win
Or leave our bodies on the plain,
We met them hand to hand again :
Amid the wild terrific din
They fought, with scarce one single word,
Save when the fierce war-whoop was heard,
Or death-yell of some Indian brave,
That rent the shadows of the grave.
All day they fought and bravely well,
But when the red sun wheeled across
The weary day, and shadows fell,
Scarce one was left to tell their loss ;
And those were wounded, smother'd o'er
With lifeless bodies, clotted gore,
And all that carnage brings before.

" At night upon the battle field
The pale white moon looked sweetly down,
Caressing faces white and brown,
Whose glassy eyes in death were sealed ;
And levelled at the blazing stars,
That swung across the sky's blue bars,
And I of all that brown-faced race,
Was left unscathed in this wild place
With compressed lips and stony face.

"With heavy heart I turned away
From bloodless faces young and old,
That made my heated blood run cold,
And haunted me for many a day.
I entered deep into the wood,
Far, far beyond that scene of blood,
And sought again my brown bride's home,
Beneath the forests verdant dome ;
And yet I scarcely knew the place
So altered was its once fair face ;
Only a few short suns had passed

Since I had left this peaceful spot,
But now, red smoking embers hot
With dark and murky clouds, that cast
A sombre pall athwart the pines,
Covered the scene with ghastly lines,
And curled amid the fire-scorched vines.

"I thought my brain would surely burst;
This awful agony of woe,
Linked with a former cruel blow
That Memory so long has nursed,
Was very, very hard to bear,
Though 'mid the embers of despair.

"I bent me low and tried to pray,
But heart and brain would not obey;
And springing to my feet I cried
In anguish for my forest bride;
But no reply. I called again,
The echoes only brought me pain,

And with a weary, weary sigh,
I longed to lay me down and die ;
But fate decreed that I must live,
Although an outcast—fugitive—
Must live to bear this blow alone,
With frozen feelings cold as stone.

" Half-crazed, at length I heard a moan,
Faint though it was, so drear, so lone,
It made me tremble like a child ;
I knew the voice so sadly wild,
And saw beneath the clouds of smoke
Where hallowed waves of pure air broke,
The half-bent form of my sweet bride
Leaning against a tasseled pine,
While drops of blood as red as wine,
Was slowly oozing from her side ;
A cross-hilt dagger at her feet,
Half-buried 'neath the blood and mire,
Glowed like a star in its retreat,
Beside that seething mass of fire
I called her name, she turned around

With hands tossed out and waved me back ;
I sprang across the fi'ry track
With joy, because my bride was found.

" ' Go back ! go back !' she cried in pain,
' I am impure ! there is a stain
Upon my soul ; with hellish lust
They left me grov'ling in the dust.
They came a few short hours ago,
And flames made red the Western skies :
Many a cruel jest and blow,
And then I fell a sacrifice.
Nay, touch me not ! pollution foul
Has stamped its seal upon my lips,
Leaving me 'neath a sad eclipse,
And eats into my very soul.
I am a vile, degraded thing,
A poisoned, deadly, Upas spring ;
But you are pure ; away ! away !
Go seek in other climes a bride,
Leave me ! forget me ! do, I pray !

I dare not have you by my side.
O God! why, *why* were we allowed
To meet . . . to see . . . to love *so* much,—
And I to shrink from his pure touch,
I who was once so purely proud.

"'You can find others pure and true,
Yes pure, but not more true than I—
Beneath the boundless arch of sky,
Whose breasts will beat for none but you;
And honor, love, a wealth of fame
Will all be yours, a noble name
I feel that you will surely win,
In lands where there is less of sin;
Where flow'rs in beauty ever bloom,
And waft upon the air perfume:
And tropic, dreamy, silken skies,
At night are full of smiling eyes,
That bend and kiss the misty air,
Whose fringes delicate and rare,
Upon the earth in silence lies.

"'No, no, this must not be! she cried
Between her tears and stifled sighs,
One hand upraised, head turned aside,
And frightened trembling of the eyes;
As I with arms extended wide,
Would fain have drawn her to my breast,
Where she might find a little rest,
Poor shrinking dove with pain oppressed.
'I must not come to your embrace,
No more! no more! my sin-stamped face,
Is stained with marks of my disgrace;
They may return and find you here,
Why, why will you still linger near?
Go! go! you must not—shall not stay—
I am impure; away! away!
Why do you force me to repeat
The horrid tale? is it not mete
That I should suffer all for you?
Who are so very, very true.'

"I sought to clasp her in my arms,
To soothe her in her wild distress,

She shrank away from the caress,
Like one beneath a serpent's charms ;
She loved me, that I knew full well,
Yes, loved me more than I can tell ;
But this degrading sense of shame,
For which she never was to blame,
Had sunk so deep into her heart,
She could not bear to have me near ;
But with her trembling sense of fear,
She longed to have me leave her here,
And for some foreign clime depart.

"So full of troubled thoughts was I,
Forgotten was the purple stains
That dropped so slowly from her veins ;
I did not think that she might die,
But with a faintness at my heart,
A faintness never known before.
Again I saw those drops of gore,
And drew me back with sudden start.
Just then a blow felled me to earth,

And shouts and yells of fiendish mirth,
Rang through my dizzy perplexed brain,
My vision tangled deep in pain ;
Though scatter'd senses soon returned,
But heart and brain in torture burned
To know that she was in their pow'r,
My precious, outraged, wildwood flow'r.

" Bound to a tree, what could I do,
Except to wait in anguish there,
My wild heart full of heavy care—
For her who was so truly true.
I saw her bend with sudden start,
With cross-hilt dagger in her hand
She rose, and facing that foul band,
(Her pure soul beaming from her eyes
More lovely far than tropic skies,)
She drove it deep into her heart,
And fell upon the earth and died,
The hot blood gushing from her side.

" They raised her bleeding from the earth,
With ghastly jokes and shouts of mirth,
And tossed her far into the flames ;—
Utt'ring meanwhile, blasphemous names,
The vilest epithets of all
That from such foul mouthed lips can fall

" A shower of starry sparks arose,
Driven across the heated sky,
Mixed with the smoky pall on high,
That bent in fringes o'er her foes :
But she upon her burning pyre,
Ascended to those realms of light
Where angels clothed in spotless white,
Are bound beneath immortal fire,
The purest, holiest of love,
That centres 'round the throne above.

" What cared I now for that wild crew,
Or what they might attempt to do ?

But had they offer'd me my life
To join them in their deeds of strife,
I would have tossed them for my fate,
Hot words of burning, lasting hate ;
And cursed each one full in the face,
And gladly rushed to Death's embrace.

" Not long before they went away,
Leaving me bound and all alone
A statue, white and chill as stone,
Beneath that floating sea of gray.
And as the moments slowly fled,
The mantling smoke so thickly spread
Across the mellon disc of day,
Took wings and faded slow away ;
And the red sun with fretted face,
Wheeled over this deserted place,
Peering amid the tangled trees,
That tore apart the scented breeze.

" I watched the blue smoke upward curl
From the red pyre where slept my pearl,

And wonder'd if she knew that I
Was chained beneath this murky sky,
Bewilder'd and so horrified,
At the rude manner she had died.
My poor torn brain I thought would burst,
For I had seen the very worst—
Of mingled hate, and passion, pride,
And vilest motives all allied,
That ever stirred the heart of man,
Or ever will, or ever can.

"The round sun fell behind the West,
And Twilight's mantle crossed the trees,
Hushed was the drowsy hum of bees,
That late had kissed the flow'rs to rest;
The white moon like a wand'ring ghost
Stagger'd across the waving sky,
That hung, a sea of blue on high,
Bent like an arch from coast to coast.
And weary stars, whose tremb'ling fires
Shot out their vari-colored beams,

Kaleidoscopic, like some dreams
That wake within the heart desires ;
Phantoms that seem so purely fair,
But waking, leave behind, despair,
A future dreary, full of care.

" Like sifted gold the moonbeams crept
Across the brown earth while she slept,
So sweetly as a little child,
Caressing her with glances mild ;
While far across the air was thrown
The long, low, muffled, dismal howl
Of wolves, that in the darkness prowl,
Wander around so strangely lone,
Seeking for victims as their own.

" I knew that they had scented blood,
For nearer drew the sullen cries,
And soon I saw their fi'ry eyes,
Like floating stars, within the wood ;

And felt their hot breath on my face,
Their reeking jaws foam-fleck'd and white
Like spray upon the sea at night,
Rushed eagerly to my embrace;
And I sank deep into a swoon,
Beneath the weary midnight moon.

* * * * * *

"A camp-fire by a winding stream
That curled along 'tween banks of green;
A few trees scatter'd here and there,
With mountains looming like a dream
Far into skies, whose silver sheen
Reflected back the moonbeams fair.
Ten bearded men in stalwart pride
Seated upon the grassy turf,
Eating their frugal meal beside
The sluggish river's glassy surf.

"This scene I saw when I awoke,
When Consciousness my trance had broke;

When Recollection oversoon,
Reverted back a few brief hours,
Where crushed and wither'd forest flow'rs
Lay bleeding 'neath a shiv'ring moon,
Beside the ashes of her pyre,
Devoured by tongues of seething fire.

" I knew these features overbold;
They were the remnant of that band
Whom I had pledged with hand on hand,
To join them in their search for gold.
And now they chose me as their chief,
The only one in their belief
Who knew where there was wealth untold.
For had I not been favored much
Since I became the red-man's friend?
Could I not easily re-touch
Some hidden mysteries, and send
A show'r of wealth into their clutch?

" We went back to the place of death,
And I, with fingers crossed on high

Beneath the blue waves of the sky,
Mutter'd a vow below my breath ;
To trail them, each and ev'ry one
To their long rest beyond the sun.
Then I arose, and 'neath the sod,
With burning eyes and thoughts of God,
I placed the remnants of her bones
And cover'd them with moss and stones ;
Then sadly wheeled my steps around,
And left that sacred piece of ground.

* * * * * *

" There is at times some impulse grand
That creeps into the vilest heart,
And men can see where they must stand
Before the world, and thus impart
A feeling born of pure desire,
To throw aside the chains that bind
An otherwise exalted mind,
Beneath degraded passion's fire.
But for that sense of utter shame,
They hesitate and dread to name

The thoughts that seek to find release,
And thus they ever hold their peace,
Become again as vile in heart,
And revel deper in the sphere,
Regardless of Compassion's tear
That from some hearts will surely start.

"Oh, ye! who are beneath the spell!
Abjure your wicked sinful life;
There is a Christ who knoweth well,
The mantling shadows that are rife
With all the sick'ning pangs of Hell.
Who stretches forth a silent hand,
That you may know, may understand.

"Who that has known the subtle pow'r
That warps the soul, each day, each hour,
When kneeling at a sinful shrine,
(When Christ himself has drawn a line,
A line of holy faith and trust
Between the just and the unjust,)

Would not have been so better far
Had they recoiled from what would mar
A life, when in its better hours
Seemed fairer so than anything,
Before they reached out for its sting
And found no more than faded flow'rs?
But such the weary path of sin,
I grant you 'tis no easy spot,
When once one's soul is steeped therein,
Nor happiness where God is not.

"Drink deep of faith, and live and trust,
The weariness of life deferred,
Some deeper currents may have stirred,
But all in time becomes as dust.
Drink deep of faith I say, and learn
That though this life may be full sad
And bitter memories return,
Enough to drive one's spirit mad,
There is a spot unknown, somewhere,
Free from the blighting touch of care,

Where seated in the realms of pray'r,
The brooding heart no longer knows
The weariness of earthly woes.

O "I grant you faith is something pure,
The faith He hands down from above ;
The faith that always will endure
His great and boundless wealth of love.
It is not like a comet's blaze
That grows full bright and then departs,
Fades slowly out in glimm'ring starts
Then vanishes amid the haze ;
But like a star whose rosy beams
Burns steadily the ages through,
That never hides itself from view
And with diviner lustre teems.

" I do not question now, nor care
What motives led me to recall
A soft pure kiss, a holy pray'r,

A vow that bound them over all,
That made me long for better things,
But draped about with sinful wings,
And spit upon and vilely curst,
I still bore deep within my breast,
A nobleness of thought, oppressed,
That tried at times the veil to burst ;
But with an effort overwise,
(At least it may have been to some,)
My lips remained as silent, dumb,
As any one's beneath the skies ;
And men have claimed I had no soul,
But had they seen part, or the whole,
They would have known what tenderness
Lay 'neath this chain of bitterness.

* * * * * *

" A ragged mountain's snow-white crest,
With scars upon its ruffled breast,
And steely clouds, that madly curled
Above an ever restless world ;
A torrent rushing blindly on,

With here and there a patch of sun,
And flow'rs, and bees, and songs of birds,
That warbled sweetly unknown words.
This was the spot I led them to,
Where gold in nuggets charmed the view.

" Not long, not long, for fortune cursed,
Again the dreaded whirlwind burst ;
With slender daggers dripping red,
They drove us from this golden bed ;
But not until they left a score
Of their own comrades steeped in gore.
Their chief I stabbed deep to the heart,
And laughed to see him quiv'ring start,
And clutch the blade that brought him death ;
And as he sank upon the rocks,
I grasped him by his long black locks
And mutter'd low, with bated breath,
Some words of vengeance, while the skies
Bent low to see his glassy eyes,
The death-film gather slowly there,
That partly hid the stony glare.

" I stood beside the torrent's flood,
Streaked here and there with spots of blood,
And watched the slender sun-beams crawl
Across the leaves, and swiftly fall
Between the needles of the pines—
In broken and distorted lines—
Dance out to where my comrades lay
Upon the turf in grim array ;
Their faces chill, and dotted o'er
With mingled spots of dirt and gore ;
And prostrate foes, with bloody brands
Clasped in their white and stiffen'd hands.

" I saw them bury friend and foe,
And counted just one score and ten
Of these vile-hearted sinful men,
That caused me so much pain and woe.
One score and ten—that was enough—
I would that they had been full less,
But vengeance knows not tenderness,
When wrongs have made one's heart so tough—

When blood has been so freely spilled,
And graves have been so deeply filled.

" I saw one leave the busy group,
And followed him into the wood ;
Then like a vulture in its swoop
My dagger crimsoned in his blood.
I laid a sign across his brow,
Cut deep with knife—a hidden vow—
Mysterious and full of dread.
When they should cluster 'round the dead
And marvel at the mystic sign,
I knew they would attempt to trace
The author of their deep disgrace,
And thus impose a bloody fine ;
But where they went, afar or back,
A sleuth-hound followed their track.

" Their numbers fearfully decreased,
Though not through means of mine alone,

For only two had I o'erthrown,
When interference from me ceased,
For a grim pestilence arose
And paid its *devoirs* to my foes:
A pestilence whose deadly shroud,
Closed slowly 'round them like a cloud,
And with its black and frosted breath,
Lured them to an untimely death.

"I would have kept that gory vow,
But late one night I sat me down
Beside the white walls of a town,—
A city 'neath a mountain's brow—
(Where they had come, the remnant left
From that red pestilential cleft,)
And waited patiently for day,
To turn upon my hated prey.

"The white moon like a weary ghost,
Arose from out the tam'rac trees,

Blown by the softly sighing breeze
Across the star-lined outer coast,
Faint limned against the sea of blue,
Where blossomed roses hung in view ;
And slender streams of chequered gold,
In patches that were overbold,
Clasped hands and danced around the flow'rs,
While dew drops fell in tinkling show'rs
Upon their freshly perfumed lips,
That in exotic fragrance drips.
How long I waited for the dawn :
The Heav'ns at length were overdrawn
With steely clouds, that winding West
Shot fiercely o'er the moon's bent breast,
While flashes of her yellow hair—
Like banners streaming far behind,—
Were caught upon the mellow wind
And tangled in the lower air.

" Beyond the mountain's riven face
I saw a star shoot wildly down,

And wheel across the silent town,
Fade slowly out and leave no trace ;
And 'neath a palm whose dew-cool hands—
Wore shackles light of dreamy bands,—
A spectre stood, with face so white
That some dark shadows of the night
Drew slowly, wav'ring, out of sight.

"That face, that form, it was *her* own,
That in the semi-darkness shone ;
So weird, so wildly sad and lone.
My God ! that she should come so far,
Come shooting down upon a star,
To find me what I am—a stone.
I bit my lips to crush a moan,
Until some drops of blood did start,—
Red drops, that came deep from my heart
And dried upon my lips of stone.

"'Go ! go ! if e'er you loved me go !'
Like music spilled upon the air,

Fell words from lips so purely fair—
And white as shimm'ring flakes of snow ;
Forsake this sinful life, and seek
Repentance low at Jesus' feet ;
Forswear the vow you madly took,
And wash your sins from off His book.
I know I've been the cause of this,
And I have suffer'd deeply too.
And you who were so over-true,
Have borne so much of bitterness ;
I wonder that you do not now
Forget me and my broken vow ;
For love like yours was truly pure :
And mine . . . . . regret came for the past,
But 'twas too late—a wife at last,
And then . . . . . well, I must not recall
Some things that I had to endure,
Things that are cover'd by a pall
That holds them in its gloomy thrall.

" ' Your life I wrecked, forgive ! forgive !
I was a weak and thoughtless girl,

And flatter'd by his style and pride
I promised to become his bride,—
And did, and went with him to live ;
But soon I found that in the whirl
Of weary fashion's thoughtless hours,
Earth was not always draped with flow'rs,—
And thought of you and your pure love,
And then my eyes were damp and wet ;
But knew that if I had been yours,
I should have been *so* happy now,—
Would never looked back with regret.
But still we may be happy yet,
I feel it so, and that somehow
Our souls will be as one above.
But, oh, forsake this dreadful life,
This bootless scene of cruel strife.

" She raised her hands as if in pray'r,
And slowly vanished in the air ;
I felt upon my lips a breath,
Pure, soft and sweet, a-chill with death ;

My heart was lighter, life held less
That weary round of bitterness ;
I looked up through the twisted trees,
And saw faint, looming out afar—
Upon blue seas, the morning star ;
And heard the low tones of the breeze,
Whisper soft notes to happy birds,
Who carrolled forth sweet unknown words.

" The rest you know ; the weary round
Of daily toil and stifled pain :
A hunter's life upon the plain,
His couch the brown and silent ground ;
A cov'ring woven in with stars,
Across the bent horizon's bars ;
With ruddy camp-fire's golden rays,
And you and I beside its blaze."

I knew *now* why he met his death,
Although I had been told before,

With blazing eyes and angry breath,
By those who dipped hands in his gore ;
But I would not, or could believe,
The fiend they painted him to me ;
And many nights beside the sea,
I bent me down where breakers heave,
And blew across the amber skies,
Some things that near His pale throne lies ;
Some things to soothe my own sad heart,
Where rankles yet a cruel dart,
Where Memory recalls—ah, well,
I can but *know* that life is Hell !

Even After.

A pure sky fringed in a sea of green;
A chipmonk singing beside a stone;
A weary heart that is sad and lone;
And a surf of tinted trees between.

The round red fruit of the wintergreens;
A gorge cut deep—and a waterfall
With its silver bells, and its wooing call,
Deep tangled amid the wildest scenes.

Even After.

O days that slide so blindly by!
O days of sad and weary pain!
You irk my soul and fire my brain,
And toss your shadows ever nigh.
Your eyes look deep into the past,
And mine . . . . . are ever backward cast:
But here let's part and say farewell,
Let us clasp hands a little spell,—
A little space . . . . . if nothing more;
But not so weary far, as I,
For you can spread your wings, and soar
Into some truer, purer sky,
And I . . . . . well, I can wait and . . . . die

Was it full well that I should meet
Upon the plain one summer day,
Beneath the flushed sun's angry heat,
A brown faced maiden by the way?
Was it full best that she should smile,
And have me bend to her . . . . . a slave?
To have me linger all the while—
Beside her . . . . . still so sadly grave?

She was so gloriously fair,
So richly cast in beauty's mould,
And such a wealth of midnight hair—
Adown her ripe brown shoulders rolled,
Such red full lips, such starry eyes
She seemed some spirit from the skies,
Blown to the earth from paradise;
I could not help but bow to her,
And idol found no worshipper
As true as I . . . . . and yet so far
From her . . . . as earth is from a star.

What if I did forget to pray?
Was I not hers, alway, alway?
Did not my very soul obey
Her slightest wish from day to day?
She could have lured me by a breath
To almost any kind of death,
So truly pure she was to me,
And I so easy to be led.
So purer far than ever drew
A breath of life beneath the blue
Bent arch of any tropic sea,
That hung high-curtained overhead.

I wander'd to her mountain town,
Brown walled and thick with orange trees,
Where soft voiced birds and golden bees
Flutter'd about in shadows brown,
And flow'rs of ev'ry shade and hue
That rainbow features ever drew,
Looked up and smiled and softly threw
Their subtle breath into my eyes,

So sweet it seemed as paradise,
Some unknown clime, some place of rest,
The purest, holiest and best.

A white, clear stream, so silent, still,
Wound slowly o'er its rocky bed,
'Tween blossomed banks of white and red;
Not overbroad, but ghostly chill.
Some palms with fingers spread above,
Bent lowly down as if in pray'r,
Casting upon the tropic air
A benediction born of love—
In silence, softly, sadly wove.
And tall, slim pines with tassels green,
In mournful accents whisper'd low,
Strange ghostly notes of hidden woe,
And drew their shadows o'er the scene.

She came to me, so kind, so fair,
The midnight glory of her hair,

Floating upon the tropic air,
And eyes that looked full deep in mine,
Came so to me and made no sign ;
I tossed my hands across to her,
So purely sweet, so grandly fair ;
Had I been less her worshipper,
Would she have given all her charms
Into my wild and willing arms ?
But she had faith, had trust in me,
And so I said, " See, darling, see,
No clouds are on the face of Day,
The sunlight pierces all the way,
With its bright, golden blades of light,
What fairer sign could we invite ?"

She raised her head from off my breast,
And slowly turned her eyes a-West,
And answer'd with a weary sigh,
" I would it might be as you will,
But we have met so much of ill,
So much of bitterness and pain

Since Cold-men came across the plain,
That we can nothing do but . . . . . die."

" Nay, say not so," I quick replied,
" I know there is full much of strife,
Full much of wrong blown out of life
When with the stronger side allied ;
And I so willingly would take
The weaker side for your sweet sake."

She held her head low bent, sidewise,
So low I scarce could see her eyes,
And deeply thought, and sadly tried
In all the stillness of her pride,
To hide from me the look of pain,
And blinding drops of misty rain,
That trembled on the fringes rare,
Which shaded eyes so purely fair ;
Eyes of such rich, deep, midnight hue,
They broke one's soul and pierced it through

As sunny lances pierce the dew,
Driving it back into the flow'r,
Its fragrance sweeter from that hour.

I crushed a flow'r beneath my heel,
From want of something else to do ;
So miserable I did feel,
I scarcely dared attempt to woo
Her from her sad and gloomy mood,
For fear she might not think me good ;
And I so sad, and weary, too,
What could I do, or think, or say,
To charm that gloomy spell away ?
I saw that she was troubled much,
But still, with words, I would not touch,
Nor seek to probe the bitter wound
That tossed so much of woe around.

At length she raised her eyes and said,
" I weep, because the sky is fair,

But soon their tresses stained with red,
Will hang low down upon the air,
And we be number'd with the dead.
A few day's since beside a lake,
I saw a pale man bend his arm
Above a fire of mystic make,
And drop within some subtle charm,
And mutter in an unknown tongue
Words stranger than were ever sung,
And then I knew that they would come
And drive us farther from our home.

"Ah, yes!" she cried in bitterness,
"My fears have long told me of this,
And we must flee, must leave our dead
Beneath the cold-men's cruel tread;
Though bloody torrents vainly run
Must go beyond the setting sun,
Must fall as falls the ghostly snow
Beneath the red sun's fever'd glow."
I read their coming in the sky,

And heard afar their battle cry,
For comets chased across the moon,
Their faces red as flow'rs in June ;
And headed for the distant West,
With burning arrows on their crest,
Driving the stars in reckless rout—
A shapeless mass, from Heav'n out,
And cast them bleeding in the sea,
Encompassed deep in misery.

Such anguish trembled in her eyes,
And hung about her dewy lips,
I started back in mute surprise,
Half-shudd'ring at the sad eclipse,
That held her bound so as a chain,
Her soul so torn with blinding pain.
But knew her purely, truly mine—
No other image in her heart.
Love never bent to purer shrine,
Nor grew so holy at the start.

The stars might lean to kiss the moon,
And rude hands crush the brow of noon ;
Or reach into the dimpled skies
And grasp a thousand starry eyes ;
Hurl them with all their force and pow'r
Into the sea, but from that hour
Had rude hands touched my peri flow'r,
No pleading voice, nor burning sighs,
Blown from the fairest tropic skies,
Could saved them from my seething wrath
Like to a whirlwind in its path.

I know that Christian laws have made
The red-man cringe and bow before
The white-man's steel, whose hungry blade
Still reeking from its feast of gore,
Half sheathed, awaits nor time, nor hour,
When victims are within its pow'r.

And you give laws, but what are they ?
Whence do they come ? What are they for ?

Simply to bring about a war,
To drive the red man far away ;
A Christian law, a Christian land,
I toss you fair ; I toss you good ;
If there be one who white in blood
Is free from any taint of crime,
Has lived so purer all the time,
Let him stand forth and show his hand.

I scarcely care for any creed,
Nor what may come, nor what may go ;
I do not cringe, nor bow, nor plead,
Nor seek for what I do not know.
I claim that life is but a snare,
A castle founded in the air,
A vision tossed from out a dream,
A broken, swollen, sinful stream ;
And man, a feather blown about
Upon its tide and driven out,
To stand, perhaps, a gilded lie,
A monument of sterling worth,

A coward when he comes to die
And leave this sin-dissected earth.

I live as near the right I can,
Though I have been beneath the ban,
And honor most the pure and true
If such there are, though they are few
And scarce to find, I give you this,
Though young in years but old in heart,
I've drank full deep the cup of bliss,
Drank deep enough to feel its smart;
Branded with lines that seared my brain,
Left me an heritage of pain,
And tore my young life all apart.

It had been better far, had we
Not met at all that sunny day,
Had we not wander'd by the way,
And thus each one the other see,—
It had been better far for me.

But mem'ries rise, and mem'ries fall,
And some are never born at all,
Yet some are bitter far than gall.
I knew that I must go away,
A little while, a little way,
And then I would return to stay ;
Would stay with her, in cloud and shine,
For she was mine, yes, wholly mine.
We parted there ; Was we to meet ?
And where or when ? The time or place ?
I pressed a last kiss on her face,
Her soft, brown face, so sacred sweet,
And wheeled about and went my way,
Nor happy since that weary day.

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Oh weary days you irk me so,
You cast a spell around my soul,

You teach me much, full much of woe,
As round and round your cycles roll ;
I mind me not of space or time,
Nor what of good or ill may chime,
I only know your tiresome gaze
Is ever rudely at me thrown.
But what am I ? a stone, a stone ;
And deep, set deep in troubled ways.

That eve beneath the flow'ry moon
I sat me down beside the stream ;
So still, so quiet as a dream,
That spread like fringes of a tune
Full far into that night of June ;
So sad, so sweet, so deep in rune,
So deeper far than anything
Those sad still notes it tried to sing.

She came again, not very far,
Came on the fringes of a star,

So purely fair as angels are ;
And said, like dimpled music, slow—
In words so weirdly sad and low
Spilled out upon the mellow air,
So pure and holy as a pray'r,
"Nay, do not grieve, I come to you,
This once although I am . . . . . untrue ;
It pains me much to speak of this,
To know the all I lost of bliss
When I threw back so much of love,
So much of tenderness unwove ;
I come from climes where blossomed trees
Like cluster'd kisses softly wave,
And toss their arms to crimson seas.
I come, and yet I am a slave ;
A slave to memories that burn,
And torture me where'er I turn,—
Unworthy I of your pure love.

"I hide my face and sadly sigh,
But still your form is ever nigh ;

You heard that I had gone away.
I had, and oh! the cruel day;
My fears, alas! proved all too true,
The Cold-men came and we must flee;
But I was lured away from you,
And we went backward to the sea;
He was a fiend, and I to save
My soul from his polluted touch,
Red-sheathed a dagger in my breast
And sprang far out into the wave.
A little spell, it was not much,
And then my weary heart had rest,
But not the rest I would I had:
My heart is very, very sad!
But when we meet the skies above,
We'll drink full deep; yes, deep, of love!"

I looked up to the bended sky,
The white full moon and tossing clouds,
That drifted slowly on like shrouds;
Their fringes slowly drawing nigh,
But she was gone, gone like a pray'r
That floats beyond the realms of air.

Pictures.

Snow flashes of wings on the sea,
That tangle them deep in the blue;
A red sun that whirls into view,
And strangles the flow'rs on the lea.

Two souls full of loving emotions,
Strong, steadfast and deep as the ocean's;
Red lips that are sealed in the twilight,
And a canon cleft deep into night.

Storm tresses that circle in clouds,
And twist over stars in black shrouds,
And cover the face of the moon,
Blown out of the midnight so soon.

Pictures.

The red sun frets the dimpled sea
That breaks so sad and mournfully
On Mexico's wild, flow'ry coast ;
Where crags and peaks lie strangely piled
In silent beauty, undefiled
As yet by foot of Spanish host.
All nature seemed alive with joy,
Though Time must wither and destroy,
The perfumed flow'rs and gorgeous trees,
That waft sweet fragrance o'er the seas.

I sit and watch the winding sea,
Its blue waves creeping gracefully
To clasp hands with the distant skies,

Blue as the depths of woman's eyes ;
I hear a sad and mournful wail,
Where the wild breakers strangely pale,
Toss towards the sun their silver hair,
So full of pleading, mute despair ;
Their white lips cold and deathly chill,
Quiv'ring and tremb'ling, never still ;
Restless and like a weary ghost,
Wandering up and down the coast.

Afar the dark brown mountains lie,
Their white heads pressed against the sky,
Where storms have curled in mad unrest,
And beat against their ragged breast ;
And at their feet, incased in brown,
The lodges of an Indian town.

I see afar upon the sea
Some things that look like drifting shrouds,
Or sea-birds tangled in the clouds,

That waltz along delightfully
Before the freshly growing breeze,
Creeping across the purple seas.
Larger and more distinct they grow,
Like sunbeams on the feath'ry snow
They hurry on, then seem to wait
As though uncertain what to do,
Had they an inkling of their fate,
Methinks they would not try to woo
The purple tide, whose glist'ning lips
Smiled askance at these lordly ships,
That came into the restless bay,
Took in their sails and quiet lay ;
Their tall and slender masts all bare,
With Spain's red ensign in the air ;
Rocking upon the breeze-blown tide,
That whisper'd like a blushing bride.

I look again, a boat well-manned
By red men from the flow'ry land,
Shoots out beyond the belted sand,

And curves along upon the main,
Like to a soul that's wrung with pain ;
All life, and swaying to and fro,
Stagg'ring as 'neath a mortal blow.
They reach the fleet, are taken in,
And then a war of words begin ;
Though peaceful, danger is implied—
But what save blood can glut Spain's pride?
Some presents pass, the boat re-manned
And headed for the distant land.

Another day, another dawn,
The white clouds kiss the murm'ring sea,
The sun shines forth delightfully,
And Night her curtain has withdrawn ;
Brown wings are curling through the air,
And fretted cries heard here and there,
Awakes a feeling of despair.
A hum of voices far away,
Floats out across the dimpled bay,
And boats are dancing on the tide,

Each full of bronzed and bearded men,
Horses and cannon, stacked in pride,
Wild buoyant hopes, with war allied,
Careless of what will come, and when.
They reach the shore, unship their freight,
And camp upon the verdant plain ;
Above their heads the flag of Spain,
Hangs drooping like a leaden weight ;
And faces red, and faces white,
Surge up and down like clouds at night.

* * * * * *

Ah, yes, it is a gorgeous night,
The bent moon quivers with delight,
And waltzes through the tropic sky
Kissing the starry flow'rs that lie
Like roses on a sea of blue,
Their beauty partly hid from view ;
The air is soft, and sweet, and still,
And rests upon each dewy hill,
O'er mountain gorge and deep ravine,

So calm, so quiet, so serene ;
Like babe upon its mother's breast,
Lulled by that mother's song to rest.

I stand within a forest glade
Where chequer'd moonbeams lie around
Upon the flow'r be-sprinkled ground,
Admiring what the Lord has made ;
A mountain wall, a chasm grand,
Is all I see of earth or land ;
The dim sea vapor of the sky
Tangled amid the forest pines,
Floats out in slim and wavy lines,
A gauzy net work hung on high.

I hear a voice as soft and low
As cooing of a turtle-dove,
Or liquid wavelets mellow flow,
A voice whose whisperings are love ;
I glance around and see the pair

Limned 'gainst the chasm's outer rim,
The pale moon shining weirdly dim,
And scudding through the mellow air ;
He, tall and slender like a pine ;
She, like a slight and clinging vine ;
One arm around her fondly thrown,
Eyes beaming love, to eyes alone
That claim those glances all her own,
And he, a willing captive there,
As humble as a lowly pray'r.

Both children of the burning sun
Whose fires they worshipped night and day,
Whose yellow hair their spirits won,
And taught them fervently to pray.
And she with such delicious eyes,
Set like the stars in summer skies ;
So mildly, purely, grandly fair,
A world of tenderness was there ;
An Aztec maiden, brown and shy,
But lovely as the fairest flow'r

That ever bloomed in tropic bow'r
Beneath soft kisses of the sky ;
Pure as an angel's dream, or pray'r
Whisper'd upon the drowsy air.
Such loveliness of soul and mind,
'Twere hard, yes, very hard to find ;
And that sweet face, that wondrous face,
Can pen invent or fancy trace ?

A bronze faced chief of regal line,
Through whose blue veins the purple blood
Of Montezuma's royal blood,
Swayed up and down like ruby wine ;
So young, so full of courage, fair,
With will to do and heart to dare ;
And that deep sense of native pride,
With nobleness of heart allied ;
Strong in his love, his faith for her,
Could she have asked for more than this ?
Such quiet, deep, true tenderness,
In such an ardent worshipper.

With eyes black as a storm-tossed night,
But swimming now in love's delight ;
They were a happy, happy pair,—
Would that their happiness might last,
But clouds were gath'ring thick and fast,—
I saw them fret the weary air.

" Zolita, see, the white moon wades
The bended arch of blue above,
The stars shall see to-morrow, love,
The crimson blood drip from our blades."
His black eyes flash, he bends his head,
Two pair of lips are sealed in red ;
One brown arm 'round his neck is thrown,
And gentle as a cooing dove
She whispers of undying love,
While he methinks seems strangely lone.

" And must you go ?" she shudd'ring asked,
" I cannot, *cannot* give you up,

So short the time since love unmasked,
And filled with pleasure deep, life's cup ;
No, no ! oh, stay ! for cruel Fate
May make my life *so* desolate."

"You love me so my precious pearl,
My heart says stay, but little girl
I must obey my country first
When threat'ning war-clouds seek to burst.
They came across the big deep waves,
Canoes with white and heavy wings,
They bore a mass of pale cold braves,
And many odd unshapely things
That sent forth show'rs of flame and smoke,
And horrid noises that awoke
The voices of the upper air,
Rumbling and rolling here and there ;
And men fell dead at each discharge,
Although their numbers are not large
They must be of immortal race,
For our best weapons leave no trace,

Of wounds upon their snowy face."
One hand caressed her flowing hair,
That flutter'd in the midnight air ;
And the dark eyes so full of love,
Were bent upon this tropic dove ;
And she, so full of troubled fears,
Her starry eyes be-dimmed with tears,
Could only plead with him to stay,
But duty's call he must obey.

"Oh, stay ! " she cried, "this night, this hour—
We will flee far to some lone bow'r,
Where we can live and love, alone ;
Where you can be all, all my own ;
We will seek out some fairy isle,
Where sunbeams ever dance and smile ;
Where flow'rs and birds in blissful dreams
Repose beside sweet mountain streams,
Caressed by zephyrs soft and free,
That hover near delightfully,—
And we can—"
"Nay, this must not be !"

Abruptly spoke the Aztec chief,
" Until our beauteous land is free
From this entrancing chain of grief,—
That these cold stranger men have brought,
A trance that we have never sought ;
And then, away, my forest pearl,
To some sweet spot where clouds unfurl
Their tresses in the mellow air ;
Where dreamy skies are ever fair,
And love can be, for years and years,
An antidote for all the fears
That have been yours this weary night ;
Forgetting all, save the delight,
The blissful dream that will be ours
When we are 'mid our wildwood flow'rs,
With the broad arch of blue above,
And only you and I to love."

Again he bends his stately head
And presses on her lips of red
A pure and holy kiss of love,

Sacred as stars that roam above,
Pure as the cold, sad touch of death,
Or sleeping infant's sinless breath.
She smiles from out the wave of tears,
For lulled are all her anxious fears ;
Her flutt'ring heart has ceased to be
The home of so much agony,
For he will come again to her,
The same true, ardent worshipper.

Now both are gone, gone like a star
That trembles in the Heavn's afar ;
A moment seen, then fades from sight,
And all is dark as darkest night.

* * * * * *

Beside Tezcuco's troubled shore,
A dark and stormy night draws near,
And scudding clouds with sullen roar
Are tremb'ling like a child with fear ;
Along the wild lake's verdant strand,
A countless host are marching on,

As fierce and angry visaged band
As the red sun e'er shone upon.

I hear afar the cannon's mouth,
Wild shouts, and horrid yells, and groans
That rend the air, and stifled moans,
Brought by the fierce wings of the South,
I watch the dark and serried lines
That twist and turn, like climbing vines,
Through mountain gorge and chasm deep,
Like vision of a troubled sleep,
Until the black gloom hides from sight
These weary wanderers of night.

I see far on the plain below
A tossing stream that boils and curls,
Seething and hissing, onward whirls,
Madden'd as by a stinging blow,
Lashed by the tempest's foaming wings,
That like a torrent, downward swings ;

Red flames are darting through the sky,
Quiv'ring amid the clouds on high,
Linked with the fierce incessant glare
That trembles on the sulph'rous air.

Amid this blinding surge of fire
And show'r of unobstructed rain
That beats upon the slipp'ry plain,—
Faces full of a deadly ire
Are tossed about like ships at sea
Beneath the storm-king's canopy ;
The clash of steel and heavy boom
Of cannon, wakes the awful gloom ;
But backward pressed, the pale foes feel
The savage thrust of Aztec steel ;
All up and down that raging stream
Long slender daggers flash and beam,
Mixed with red fire-arm's deadly gleam.

A bridge that spans the raging flood,
The only path of hope for those,

Where comrades smother'd in their blood
Lie 'neath the heel of brown-faced foes,—
Is now the scene of thickest fight,
For Spaniards in their rapid flight
Have cast aside all cum'brous arms,
Wading breast deep 'tween blood and fire,
Where, 'mid the battle's wildest charms,
Wretches with horrid shrieks expire.
Swords drop from many nerveless hands,
Sink 'neath the wave to rise no more,
Their dripping blades amass of gore,—
Redd'ning for miles the river sands.

The bridge is passed, but forward press
A countless host all numberless,
But fire and steel have blocked the pass
With bodies, quiv'ring trunks and limbs,
That in red pools of torture swims.
A ghastly, wild, distorted mass ;
And broken swords and daggers red,
Clutched by the wounded and the dead,

Mingled with blazing brands that lie
Like stars upon a midnight sky.

A deaf'ning sound, and bridge and men
Are hurled across the fi'ry sky,
Cast up from that red seething den
Where bloody corpses deeply lie ;
A black'n'd show'r of flesh and bone,
Pulseless and chill as harden'd stone.

The storm has passed, the red sun brings
The day car on its blazing wings,
And drives away the gloomy pall
That hung so angry over all ;
Below upon the ghastly plain,
Where friend and foe commingled lie
Beneath red fringes of the sky,
Dead, wounded and adrift with pain ;
I saw a maiden wander lone,
With features brown, though chill as stone

Amid the pale and weary dead,
Upon their black and blood-scorched bed.

Not long before she bent to earth
Beside a chief, whose face was prest
Upon the black earth's swarthy breast,
That held so much of human worth ;
A kiss upon the cold chill lips,
A strange wild flutter of the eyes,
That told of Reason's sacrifice,
And the dread bitterness that sips,
Ghoul-like, the fairest sense of life,
Peopling the future years with strife.

" They told me so !" she cried in pain,
" I heard them whisper on the plain ;
They said that you had missed the path,
And that these cold-men, in their wrath,
Slid down upon the star-lit air
And tangled red fires in your hair.

I met them with their blazing eyes
Last night beneath the angry skies ;
They danced about beneath the trees
And buzzed around like yellow bees,
Mutt'ring unholy gibberish ;
And then they showed me spots of red,
And said they plucked them from your head,
And then, oh, then ! how I did wish
That I might die,—be with you dead.

" I heard the Strong-man of the sky
Peal forth his heavy battle cry,
And saw his flashing plumes of white
Stream out upon the gloomy night :
And then I heard some other things,
That sounded like the flutt'ring wings
Of icy pebbles in the trees,
Cast down from out the frozen seas,
That sometimes lie so strangely curled
Above the brown breast of the world.

"There! see them now; they come! they come!
But they don't speak, their lips are dumb;
They dance around the sleeping dead,
And toss red embers through the air,
Then curl their heads as if in pray'r,
And streak their faces deep in red,
From clotted blood and human hair.

"You do not speak, your eyes are cold,
Your lips are like a chilly stone,
The shades of darkness have unroll'd,
And I sit by your side *so* lone . . . . .
You will not speak . . . . . What! are you dead?
O, Christ! ha! ha! this is not much,
For see how easily I touch
The crimson spot so near your head;
I saw it slide down from the air
Upon the red sun's golden hair;
They toss their hands to me and say
That I must leave you, go away;
But here, let me this feather take

And keep it always for your sake :
I saw some blood upon its tip,
It slowly fell, I saw it drip,
And leave upon your cheek a stain
That made the South-wind sigh in pain."

She rose upon her feet and slow
Departed from the crimson field ;
Bent hands before her like a shield,
And chanted sweetly soft and low :

"I know that you'll come in a buttercup,
When the moon is bent and the stars are white,
And the fire-flies flutter about the cup
Of the violet blue at dead of night.

"We'll wander away up the yellow stair,
And hang far out on the tropic sky,
Where the moonbeams twist in the misty air,
And the tangled fringes softly lie.

" We will live in a world of suns and stars,
And will cross the skies in a silk canoe,
And paddle far out beyond the bars,
Where the day is mantled with streaks of blue.

" Ah, yes ! you will come, for I see you now,
But your lips are white and your eyes are stilled,
There's a streak of blood upon your brow,
And I know your heart is forever stilled."

Thine.

Christ knows I would I had the pow'r
To speak at any time I choose,
But that long looked, long wished for dow'r,
My lonely spirit never woos.
And when words hang upon my tongue,
Words I so long to give to some,
A hidden spirit inward hung,
Restrains them—and my lips are dumb :
And only through my uncouth pen
Can I explain,—be understood,
But Christ knows best . . . . . perhaps not then,
So sometimes queer my wayward mood.

Thine.

He stood beside the shadow of a throne,
Faint, indistinct, majestic, all alone:
He gazed across the curling sea of glass,
Whose phosphorescent surface like a mass
Of molten silver, 'neath the midnight moon,
Glances into the heavens like a deep swoon;
The pressure of the quiet drowsy air,
Awakes no feeling save of wan despair:
The stars with fitful flashes, wild and chill,
Gaze coldly down on rock, ravine and hill,
Stone-cold, like marble in its gloomy bed,
Unresurrected, pulseless, chill and dead.

* * * * * * *

Some souls are blessed with a prophetic eye,
Claiming to read the signs of destiny:

Tracing amid the stars grim fortune's path,
The tide of honor, the abode of wrath,
The all that makes man's life a hell on earth,
A torture borne from very childhood's birth :
Or, pleasure mixed with deep and lasting greed,
Where vice and sin upon its vitals feed.
Seers though they claim to be, it is full well
That man should scorn to heed the tales they tell :
Put trust in Him who rules the restless wave,
Who died upon the cross our souls to save.

Knowledge brought forth to life through Sorrow's
womb,
And nursed amid the deepest seas of gloom ;—
They who have drank too deeply of the cup,
Know what must be, what hopes are offer'd up,
What desolation warps and wears the brain,
Whose heritage for life is one of pain.
Whose only crime was loving one too well,
For this, alone, he feels the pangs of Hell.
And yet he must not murmur, make no plaint ;

His will must be obey'd, however faint :
It was to be, and Hope lies crushed and dead,
'Mid Dead Sea ashes now he droops his head.

* * * * * * *

She was not vain, and yet you'd know 'twas pride,
This loftiness of soul, with love allied ;
The haughty poise of that dark regal head,
With the rich wealth of hair around it spread :
True loveliness of soul, that underlies
The matchless splendor of those soft brown eyes.
And she was pure, yes, very, *very* pure,
Yet charms like hers are never premature ;
But sacred as the pilgrim's holy shrine,
That Mecca where the lost become divine.
No thought of pen or pencil can portray,
The purity of mind beneath her sway.

Man's mind may sometimes soar to realms
unknown,

Where Silence sits upon her sullen throne,
Bewilder'd, lost amid those depths of space—
Imagination's fingers fail to trace ;
And then, all rudely wakened, will return
To earth once more, whose transient glories burn
Beneath the golden face of yon bright orb,—
The white round sun, whose gorgeous rays absorb
The waves of darkness, and bring forth to life
The crowded passions of love, hate and strife ;
That makes this busy world a reckless snare,
Three-fourths of sorrow, and the rest of care.

Like to the breath of Etna's boiling tomb,
Whose sulph'rous crater seethes like edge of doom ;
Throws out from its abyss a world of flame,
Metoric show'rs that writhe and flush with blame,
Curving and hissing through the vault of Heav'n,
A shapeless mass of torment, upward driv'n :

Then downward hurled into the tossing sea,
Whose boiling waves borne backward spitefully,
Return all restless to the charge again,
Regarding not the breaker's hidden pain,
'Till its torn breast upon the jagged coast
Shines in the semi-darkness like a ghost.

* * * * * *

He would become enravished with the sky,
And watch for hours the rosy stars on high:
The wildly drifting moon caressed by clouds,
The silver rain that sifted through the shrouds
Of darkness, covering the tall green pines,
Whose slender needles stood apart in lines;
Limned 'gainst the Western sky so proud and still,
Drinking the breath of flow'rs from vale and hill,
Until enraptured, he would turn away
And sweetly dream, until the dawn of day.

He wander'd through the wildest glens, and made
His bed at times beneath the forest shade,

To watch the clouds wade through the sea of blue,
Fringed with rich colors, ev'ry shade and hue ;
Building amid the mellow realms of air
A precious dwelling, poetry and pray'r,
Until the red sun drew along its path
Dark vapors full of seething foam and wrath :
Led on by the long, low, distant swell and moan
Of breezes, through the forest arches thrown ;
Surging and tossing like the restless sea,
Its voice so full of untold misery.

The book of Nature spread before his sight
Was purity and truth,—untold delight,
Until *she* came, and then all things were changed,
No more through mountain gorge and glade he ranged.
She was his sun, his light, his earth, his all :
The pleasant past he cared not to recall :
The future held at least enough of bliss,
Joy full and deep, and untold tenderness ;
Vows plighted 'neath the white and marble moon,

Those happy nights in flow'r-be-scented June ;
The thrilling words of love that were so dear,
Falling so sweetly on his waiting ear.

It came at last, those notes of misery,
Like cyclone o'er the pulseless Southern sea,
Chill, cold and deadly, cavernous and deep,
Too rudely waken'd from his loving sleep.
It might have been a crime for him to love
So wildly, madly, true as stars above ;
But Time and Sorrow cling together yet,
And he, alas . . . . . would that he could forget !
But still that dull and pressing sense of pain
Seems crowding farther into heart and brain :
All passionless this tide of grief so deep,
Might find relief if he could only weep.

He leaned against a tall and ragged cliff,
His features pallid, form erect and stiff,
As if cut from the cold and chilly stone :

No smile across the sad white features thrown.
Below, the waves in trembling circles curled,
Above, the sleepless moon gazed o'er the world
And near him in the wan and mellow light,
A form, a spectral form draped full in white ;
The form that he was doomed to bid farewell,
And thus he spoke to her he loved so well :

" And you have come to gaze on me ?
You look so white—so strangely white—
Your eyes flash like the summer sea
Beneath the yellow moon's pale light :
You look at me . . . . . then turn your head,
And your white cheeks seem wondrous red ;
And stars swim through your waving hair,
And restless wander through the air.
You make a gesture with your hand,
One that I cannot understand :
It is as well perhaps, for me,
That I remain in mystery.

" I met you one wild chilling day,
When winds were high on stream and way ;
'Twas just before the shadows fell,
Yes, I remember, *very* well.
I knew that I had met my fate . . . . .
'Tis over now . . . . . how desolate !
I watched your form 'till hid from view,
Then turned aside to think of you.
What could I do ? What could I say ?
I knew my heart was yours alway ;
Was yours, is yours, will be 'till . . . . . death
Has drawn my life with latest breath.

" I think me of one sacred night,
The moon was bent, the stars were pale,
And oh, my heart was very light,
And free as song birds in the vale.
My arms around you fondly thrown,
Your face upturned upon my breast,
Your brown eyes full of love alone,
Clear as the purest lake at rest.

Your lips met mine, your full rich lips,
No cloud was there, no wild eclipse:
I drank perhaps, too deep of bliss
In that long, sweet, soul-thrilling kiss,
That tropic night in scented June,
Beneath the ghostly wand'ring moon;
And you were mine, what deeper bliss
Could mortals taste . . . . . than this, than this?

"My life . . . . . far better had it been
Crushed out in tender childhood's time,
Long ere I reached my manhood's prime,
Than known how much there is of sin.
Some lives are better dead, than made
A sunless fountain, deep in shade;
A river wand'ring sad and lone,
'Mid rocks where light is never thrown.

"That Autumn night—that bitter eve—
The dreary wind—the clouds so chill—

The river winding 'tween each hill,
And yet, I still must sadly grieve.
A soul was bruised, but not one moan,
And lips were whiter far than stone:
A wound that bled, seared as by fire,
Whose embers never can expire,
Was mine—is mine—to bear . . . . . alone.

"And we have met so strangely too;
You, by the white sea's outer rim,
Beneath the moonbeams pale and dim,—
And I, so sadly grave and . . . . . true.
Well, Time rolls on, and you forget
What happened in the long ago,
But still I feel that you must know,
And that at times your eyes are wet:
And sometimes when you are alone,
There comes a thought you hate to own,
A feeling born of longing pain,
To have me by your side again.
Could I but know this to be *true*,

I would not keep away from you.
And you come here, why this unrest?
What trouble courses through your breast?
If I might only share your pain,
Yes, share it all, I'd not complain:
'Twould only be a little more
Of torment on this earthly shore;
But then, it would be borne for you,
And I, would that I were . . . . . less true.

"'Tis long ago since first we met,
I watch the stars and wonder yet:
I worshipped you—maybe forgot
There was a Christ, a Heav'n, a spot
Where all of sin could be washed out,
Leaving behind no trace or doubt.
I worshipped you . . . . . was that a sin?
If so, I reap enough of woe,
Though more I would not have you know,
The pain I still must wear within.

"Life is a riddle, strangely laid

A varied tide of sun and shade,
At times so wildly bright and fair,
With scarce one cloud to fret the air ;
At others, full of wan despair
And the dull sense of pain that brings,
A burden on its dreary wings.

" The Bulbul to the blushing rose
Its vows of constancy disclose ;
But sadly sweet its plaintive tones,
When its fond mistress pines away,
Dropping its leaves from day to day
On mossy earth and cold gray stones.
So rich in love, so full of joy,
It seemed full cruel to destroy.
But then life is a strange wild road,
And some must bear a weary load.

" And other hearts may bleed as mine,
But will they prove as true ? As kind ?

Will they not seek some other shrine?
Some other love? . . . . . yes, love is blind.
The tale is often told, and still
The same will be retold, until
The earth shall crumble, be no more,
The stars fall on an unknown shore,
And all things bow unto His will.

"How odd—how strangely odd it seems,
And yet, the spirit of my dreams
Foretold to me this chilling woe,
This cruel, deadly, wasting blow.
And I, yes I laughed it to scorn,
Would that I never had been born.
Well, it is past, and I still live,
Though but the ghost of former years,
Cold, passionless, and free from tears:
What else have I the world to give?

"I pleaded long, but 'twas in vain,
For you were firm and would not yield,—

I set my lips, for love repealed,
I knew to me, meant . . . . . lasting pain.
And you, ah, yes, you thought that I
. . . Would soon forget, that love . . . . would die,
But now you know that time and place
Has not removed one single trace.
I cannot blame, I do not blame,
My heart will always be the same ;
And you . . . . . could I but make your life
A sunny stream, devoid of strife,
A road of happiness and light,
I would if need be, build my pyre
And in its creeping flames expire.

" You loved me once, was all my own :
I close my lips . . . . . suppress a groan,
A sigh . . . . . a world of inner pain,
My feelings, all, I must restrain.
I know, I think it was all pride
Why you refused to be my bride.
Well, style and pride go hand in hand

And retribution comes at last,
And oh, such longings for the past,
I feel that you *must* understand.

"And I am free to come and go,
Am free to wander here and there,
Am free as God's pure mountain air,
Yes, free as belts of shining snow.
And yet not free, for you are near
In ev'rything I see or hear:
In mountain gorge or canon's mouth,
In zephyr's from the sunny South,
In all that time or fortune brings
Upon their weary pulseless wings:
They leave behind some bitter stings.

"And you, who come so wondrous still
To meet me here this weary night,
A wand'ring spirit clothed in white,
So deathly pale, and weirdly chill.

Have you not yet enough of peace?
Or must your spirit seek release
And follow me? Well, why is this?
Have you found out at this late hour
Your flutt'ring heart was in my pow'r?
Could I believe it . . . . . oh, what bliss!

"Yes, it is past . . . . . the thrilling tide
Of love, I stand no more beside;
Its waters ever onward glide,
And leave me on a barren shore
With ghostly mem'ries, evermore.

"Why do you turn your head sidewise,
And place one hand across your eyes—
The other raise—as if to keep
Some vision born of troubled sleep
From drawing near? Is it at thought
Of agony your words have wrought?
You sigh and wish I was content;

You called me cruel, and complain
Because I pleaded hard . . . . . and lent
My pow'r of words your love to gain.
I know you sympathized with me :—
My heart was like the storm-tossed sea,
And all of love that centered there
Was broken—crushed amid despair,
But still was firm as firm could be.

" Yes, death will come ; delightful sleep
Where bleeding hearts no more need weep.
The passing from earth's scenes and woes
Into a clime no mortal knows ;
Where fever'd dreams no more arise
To mock one's hopes and dim one's eyes.
It must be a delightful dawn,
From weary toil and trouble here,
To that unknown, yet welcome sphere,
Where angels hold the curtains drawn,
And life is love . . . . . and love is life,
When souls with happiness are rife.

What more? . . . . . What less? . . . . . It
is not much :
Both fade, both faint at Death's white touch,
And then there is no more of strife.
Thank God for this . . . . a little spell
Of suff'ring . . . . woe . . . . . and all is well.

" I hear sweet music in the air,
It touches chords within my breast,
It soothes, but does not bring me rest,
For Mem'ry's voice is always there:
I've tried, oh yes, how hard I've tried
To drive your image from my heart,
To be content . . . . . but pain will start,
And all of bitterness allied.
And I have known *no* happy hour,
Save what has come in dreams alone,
Since the sad time my soul was thrown
'Neath grim misfortune's sable flow'r.
Yet I have smiled . . . . . have made believe
That I was happy, still I grieve,

Nor care not now who thinks me cold,
And cynical, and overbold.

"And you had confidence in me,
And was that confidence betrayed?
Glance through these weary months and see
If I have not been true to thee—
Will be, through more than one decade;
And even if it be a crime
To love you now, when you forbid,
I cannot help it, for gray Time
Refuses to shut down the lid,
And you remain before my sight
As sacred as a starry night

"I say unto the stars above,
Those blossoms in a sea of blue,
The same that I now say to you,
For they have heard me speak of love.
My heart is warm and strong to bear,
And have I not enough of care?

"And I have prayed most fervently
That life for you might ever be
A round of pleasure, deep and free,
Unsullied, never knowing grief,
A happiness beyond belief.
Christ grant at least that this be so!
That you may never, *never* know
What sorrow is . . . . . this world is wide,
And what of ill your life betide,
One word would bring me to your side;
And that . . . . . if you would only speak.
. . . . . How hard it seems to be so weak,
Yet strong to do aside from this.

"I would that you might see my heart:
Ah, no, not *that!* for you would start,
And weep . . . . . draw back from the abyss,
The frightful yawning gulf of woe
That He has thought best to bestow."

He leaned his weary head upon his hand,

His wild heart full of silent misery,
Throbbing and beating like the deep sad sea :
On either side arose the mountains grand,
And at his feet the moaning of the tide
Broke on the ragged coast in sullen pride.

He raised his eyes, the ghostly form had flown,
The stars above seemed to grow wondrous red ;
Below, all save the sea, was like the dead.
The pale moon hung upon her marble throne,
And wildly cast her tresses in the air,
In mute appeal, but full of deep despair.

As Ever.

Land full of treachery and woe.
With perfumed flow'rs and gorgeous skies,
Scarce pressed by foot, save savage foe,
Where nature's beauty never dies:
Mountains that turn their lips to stars,
Receiving back an ans'ring kiss.
Deep veins of wealth and golden bars,
Won through fierce battles, mixed with bliss:
These, these are thine—land far away
'Neath gory clouds, Arizona!

As Ever--A Tale.

Turn back, my muse, into the sleep of years,
And cull from out the records of the past,
Delusive dreams and visionary fears,
The wealth of joy,—ah, me! that could not last:
The stream that quivers 'neath the thrilling flow
Of all that made life happy, 'ere the shrine
Was deluged with a flood of untold woe,
The fragments of a dark and gloomy line.

Vain, transitory dream! the fruit of years
Is swallowed by the Future, dark and drear,
The countless tide of hopes, and doubts, and fears,
Will they still haunt me, and thus draw anear
Athwart the semblance of a broken life?

Methinks that thus I should not curse my fate,
Yet, turning from this wild uncertain strife,
How can I help but feel most desolate?

The low soft music of a distant bell
Breaks sweetly on the drowsy summer air:
Where'er the gentle notes in languor fell,
They seemed to murmur soft a lowly pray'r:
Father, I thank thee for the soothing charm
That binds my spirit now anear to thee,—
The spell . . . . . it drives away the surge of harm,
That beats upon the sands of Mem'ry's sea.

* * * * * *

The moonlight streams upon the wave
Where brave Leander found a grave;
And the sad whippowill's lone notes,
Across the dimpled surface floats.
At times dark clouds obscure the face

Of her whose form they would embrace ;
The marble moon, whose glowing eyes
Half-hidden 'neath the tinted skies,
Where the weird light with parted rays
Breaks ghost-like through the crystal haze ;
That wafted by the Eastern breeze,
Creeps slowly o'er the whisp'ring seas :
The haze grows deeper, and the skies
Can scarce be seen by human eyes,
But here and there a rosy star
Shines sweetly from its throne afar :
A spicy odor fills the air,
Breathed forth from flow'rets rich and rare ;
Pale Silence reigns, Queen of the Wave,
Fair goddess of the truly brave,
With her white hands upon the sea
She guides the reins of Destiny.

Hours passed, and still that same weird spell
Hung forth upon the trembling wave

Unmindful of the wind's low swell,
Whose scented breath sweet odors gave :
At length the shroud of midnight came,
And upward rolled that sparkling haze,
While in the North, a sea of flame
Lit up the sky with amber blaze,
And the pale stars with tinted eyes,
In silence vanished 'neath the skies ;
And slow across the arch of blue,
Shot flashes varying in hue.
Some pale and white, and crimson fringed,
As though the orb of day had singed
Their silken edge, and left behind
A trace of beauty in the wind.
The amber blaze lit rock and dell,
Where'er its tinted fingers fell ;
It shone upon a castle bold
Whose lordly chief had wealth untold,
Whose goodly lands stretched far and wide,
From Saro's shore to Helle's tide,—
And from the wild Ægean sea,
Far out from where Marmora's wave,
In sullen grandeur on the lea,

Breaks forth in songs of minstrelsy,
Where e'er its crystal waters lave.

The ruins of this castle fair
Are buried 'mid the prints of Time,
And now, the wild rose climbs the stair
Amid the wilderness sublime.
The owl amid the sculptured stones,
Sits through the night and plaintive moans ;
The red fox burrows 'neath the walls,
Roaming amid deserted halls.
Its sharp, quick bark, is echoed back
From rocks whose surface leaves no track,
And the wild stillness of the scene
Doth well become an Eastern dream.

In years agone this castle stood
Within a dark and silent wood,
While far below, the dimpled tide
Of Helle's waters outward glide,

Leaving behind a transient gleam
Of silv'ry spangles on the stream.
The landward side was steep and bold,
  Locked in by rocks and twisted trees,
Whose mossy trunks and branches old,
  Had breasted oft the angry breeze :
A glen through which a singing stream
  Wound in and out, 'tween banks of fern,
Where fairies might have met to dream
  Between the rocks so gray and stern :
It was a wild and gorgeous scene,
That graced this tangled lone ravine.

This night was aye, a counterpart
  Of one that lived long years ago,
When a brave, true, though sinful heart,
  Was struggling with a tide of woe.
The same wild flashes in the sky
That brought the silken moonbeams nigh :
The same pale moon whose marble eye
Shone ghastly from the tinted sky ;

The castle with its ruined walls,
Its sculptured shrine and marble halls,
Was at that time—in years agone—
Fair as the sun e'er shone upon ;
But now a mass of chill gray stones
Through which the wild beast proudly roams.

Within the glade, a motley mass
Of revellers choked up the pass,
And in their midst one kingly form
Whose breast bore scars of battle storm ;
The owner of this wide domain,
Wrought through an heritage of pain ;
A goodly feast was held this year,
In mem'ry of the wand'rer drear,
Who came at last, to find his sire
The victim of an outlaw's ire ;
Of grief there was at least no sign,
He drowned it 'neath a flood of wine ;
But this one night, his bearded lips
Refused to taste the ruby flood,

It savored, ah, too much of blood,
Hidden beneath his finger tips.

Men boasted of their gallant deeds,
Of border wars and widow's weeds ;
Of bitter feuds and deadly strife,
Where foemen vainly strove for life ;
And some of love won in a day
But soon cast ruthlessly away ;
Each one must tell his own life's tale
Before he left this wild wassail ;
All save the bronzed and bearded man
Had spoken of their early life,
And he with eagle eye did scan
The noisy group, whose wordy strife
Kept up a wild and angry din
Like souls plunged into depths of sin ;
At length, one bolder than the rest
Looked askance at the lordly guest,
And in a voice of boldness cried,
" Ho, judge, a tale ! you should not hide

The secret of your early days
Beneath a garb of gloomy haze."
"Softly, my son," a hand was laid
On the rude lips, as if afraid,
"Sacred the thoughts of ev'ry one;
Man should not seek to tear aside,
The veil the past would seek to hide."

More clam'rous grew each dusky guest
As closer they the stranger pressed;
He glanced around the surging crowd,
His haughty features cold and proud;
Then cast his eyes upon the cup
Whose liquid fires still bubbled up
A brown cold foam, that sought to rise
But paled before his burning eyes.
Was it a sigh? Was it a moan
That mem'ry's chain had 'round him thrown?
That broke the thread of his cold life,
The transient gleam of Passion's strife?
Or, thoughts of the delicious hours

Passed 'neath the sylvan shaded bow'rs,
With some pure, noble hearted woman,
Proving at least his heart was human ;
That cut his stony lips apart,
And op'ed his long-closed weary heart.

" Perhaps 'twas on some tropic isle
Where sunbeams meet to dream the while ;
Perhaps 'twas on this very shore
Where Helle's dimpled waters pour ;
Or, far beyond the Southern sea
Where sea-nymphs dance in ecstasy,
To the spilt music of the tide,
At bidding of old Neptune's bride;
It might have been 'mid blood and strife
Where first I drew the breath of life ;
What matters it ? The same pure air
Is breathed by mankind ev'rywhere ;
The richest scenes ofttimes prove cold,
And all that glitters is not gold ;
The heart that is with love allied

Will bravely stem misfortune's tide;
Though faintly glows the beacon star
From out the surge of storm-tossed war;
A meteor, whose pale sad rays
Is sifted through the blinding haze;
At times scarce seen, at others fair
As ever shone in realms of air.
A blazing star at dead of night
Fades slowly at the dawn of light;
The mellow air that shrouds the West
Has heard the tale of love confessed;
Has marked the blush o'erspread the cheek,
The timid glance from eyelids meek,
The quiv'ring lips, and falt'ring sigh
That fills the soul with ecstasy;
And yet, it has viewed other scenes,
Where mingled sadness intervenes;
Watching the dawn of fairer skies,
When Hope appears with smiling eyes.

"I recked not where my footsteps strayed,

Through mountain gorge or woodland glade ;
A hut of boughs walled in by pine,
Fringed with a suit of soft ermine ;
A bed of leaves, soft, downy nest,
Where I might stretch my limbs at rest ;
And this was all my spirit craved,
For this the jungle's depths I braved ;
At last I found a wild retreat
And thither bent my wayward feet ;
Beneath a yawning cliff I stood,
While at my feet a silver flood
Sprang singing o'er its dark gray bed,
Like drifting sunbeams softly sped ;
A tall tossed swell of surf-like pine
  Stretched out beyond the canon's mouth,
And leagues beyond, the royal line
  Faded away far to the South ;
Gray mountains with their batter'd face
  Were limned against the western sky ;
Dark, proud and haughty, as the race
Who kindled lodge-fires at their base,
  Where purple shadows softly lie :

'Twas here I pitched my wildwood tent
Living alone in banishment ;
The cause—no man will ever know ;
The flood of sin, the tide of woe ;
No priest around his burning shrine
Can torture words from lips of mine ;
No stern-faced seer with threat'ning eyes
Can snatch from me my gloomy prize ;
Nor can the very jaws of death
Remove the spell with failing breath ;
The secret dies within my breast,
The grave will give my spirit rest.

" I know I was misunderstood,
I could not stem the angry flood ;
My youthful heart in danger nursed
Cared but to see the whirlwind burst ;
And when it came—the wild eclipse—
I met my doom with stony lips—
And vowed to have revenge ; that night
When all the sky was cloudless blue,

And stars sent down a rain of light,
  Soft, hazy and of golden hue,
Filling the earth with wild delight ;
When night-birds wailed within the wood
And warbled songs in varied mood ;
When wild beasts roamed the restless brake,
  Companions of the sombre wood,—
Snuffing the air, in hopes to slake
  Their burning thirst with human blood ;
When the red torches of the West
  Glowed fiercely 'mid the tangled maze
  Like some ill-omened star, whose rays—
Half-tangled by the flutt'ring breast
Whereon its fi'ry fingers prest,
Sank with the early dawn to rest ;
When the low breeze in whispers fell
On dreamless wave and sleeping dell ;
And the soft murmur of the tide
Claimed kindred with its pale-faced bride—
The marble moon, whose cold white eye
Rose slowly from the Eastern sky ;
When all was beautiful and gay,

With heart surcharged with Passion's sway,
I turned from bearded men away
And threaded deep the tangled wild,
Where nature reigned and Fortune smiled,
As happy as a little child,
Save when the mem'ry of my wrongs
  Awoke within my gloomy breast.
  The phantom of a wild unrest,
'Gainst those to whom the sin belongs.

" Go, read the footprints that have traced
The downfall of a noble race,
And see behind this trail of blood
Where bearded men in battle stood—
The young wives moan, the orphans wail,
Fit sequel to the gloomy tale;
The white man found behind each rock
A leveled tube's volcanic shock.
Behind each tree a bended bow,
And sinews braced to meet the foe;
And on each face a scowl of hate

Foretelling of their dismal fate.
The annals of the West can tell,
  Of white men lured beyond the place
  Where Colorado's waters trace
Their winding swell through brake and dell ;
Of men sent forth upon their trail
To learn at last the weary tale,
And leave their bones beside some stream
Where the dark Nightshade casts a beam
Of baleful horror with its gleam ;
Or far beyond the feather'd swell
  Of Val de Chino's sun lit shore,
Where the dim purple shadows fell,
  Mixed with the sullen canon's roar ;
They sleep within this wild-wood vale
Who followed on this ghastly trail.

" One night, while wand'ring by the side
Of Rio Verde's moonlit tide,
I heard a faint, yet plaintive moan,
Across the dimpled waters thrown ;

I listened for the cry once more,
But all was still from shore to shore ;
Save where the rippling of the flood
Beat on the coast in playful mood.
A strange, wild tremor shook my frame,
Unnoted was the call that came
In answer to that plaintive cry,
The moments waltzed so swiftly by ;
At length the muffled plash of oars
Resounded from the winding shores ;
And peering through the fretted wood
I saw a boat shoot o'er the flood ;
It was not made by red men's hands,
But modelled from the Eastern lands ;
And held within its curved embrace
Two stalwart forms my eyes could trace ;
One was a plumed and painted brave,
Chill and unbending as the grave ;
The other was of paler skin,
Whose features bore the marks of sin,
Stamped in the savage, stern set face,
Where warmer feelings left no trace ;

The bearded lips and cruel eye
Seemed now surcharged with ecstasy,
And I could note the conscious pride
With which he dashed the waves aside,
And floated downward with the tide.

" Some feeling almost immature,
I hardly knew what it could be,
So strangely, oddly, sought to lure
Me out upon that crystal sea ;
I watched them on their winding way,
'Till faint outlined against the sky
They faded in the midnight gray,
Where the brown shadows softly lie.
Determined to unravel all
Of mystery beneath the pall,
That mantled dim above the wave,—
I sprang into my bark canoe,
And paddled silent as the grave
Afar upon the dimpled blue,
Hugging the shore whose shadowed face

Shielded me from the moonbeam's trace ;
No trail to mark their fleeting course
As o'er the waves they rushed with force ;
What reck'd I where their boat might land,
I was a child of Fortune's band ;
Nor life nor death could turn aside
The flood of vengeance hate supplied,
Exhaustless as the ocean's tide.

" Gliding along the tangled shores,
The moonlight on their dripping oars
Reflected back the silver rain,
Torn from that silent dreamless main ;
Like the pure drops from beauty's eye
The shrine of passion could not dry.

" Like bloodhound on the scented trail,
I followed 'neath the moonbeam's pale ;
For miles adown that dimpled tide
My bark canoe did noiseless glide ;

Keeping in view those stranger men
Who floated softly through this glen
At last they turned their bark to shore,
Upheld them both—each dripping oar ;
And the rocked boat with sullen thuds
Crushed savagely the scented buds,
That grew beside the river's brink
Where the pale flow'rets came to drink ;
The brave stooped low, and I could see
His features smile exultantly,
As folded in his stalwart arms
An Indian maiden lifeless lay,
While sinews bound her ripe brown charms
O'er which the moonbeams sought to play ;
Into the wood they noiseless went
And thither I my footsteps bent,
Gliding along with noiseless tread,
Silent and still as Nature's dead ;
Intent to rescue her whose moan
Was late across the waters thrown ;
Tossed out upon the startled air,
Sounding to me just like a pray'r,

Without one hope from Mercy's aid
Nor e'en the faintest wish obey'd,
That might have eased the tortured heart
And turned aside the with'ring smart.

"At length I saw a pale red light
Dance in and out beneath the trees,
And over it the moonbeams white
Played gently in the drowsy breeze;
A wreath of smoke that curled and bent
Erratic in its banishment,
And gently kissed the rustling leaves
Where hung the dew-drop's silver sheaves;
A glitt'ring star whose silver rays
Shone faint beneath that smoky haze.

"They went into the drowsy camp
Faint challenged by a sentinel,
Who, from the shadows pale and damp
Muttered the cry that "All is well!"

Then placed their victim on the ground,
And with a thong of deerskin bound
The trembling form close to a tree,
Where the red firelight fitfully,
From embers crusted with the foam
  Of creamy ashes o'er them thrown,
Fantastic as some wand'ring gnome,
  Upon whose elfish face a frown
  Of satisfaction drifted down,
Leaving behind a ghastly smile
That told of vengeance, hate and guile.

"The hours in silence passed away,
And just before the dawn of day,
I, noiseless as the silent Night,
Had marked the course of speedy flight;
And creeping towards the sentinel
With knife unsheathed and breathing death,
Like tiger on his form I fell
  And bore him down upon the heath,
  Myself above, his form beneath;

The red blood from his quiv'ring clay
In smoking torrents passed away ;
As deep the blade sank in his breast
By the quivering flesh caressed.
Never a sigh, nor never a moan
That told of the life just overthrown ;
Never a gasp nor never a breath
Lingered around the Valley of Death ;
But silent and still the night passed on,
And the tree-toad sang by the moss grown stone,
While the night hawk wailed in the wood alone,
And the bitterns cry from the distant wave,—
With a moaning sound that was sadly grave,
Lingered about 'mid the scented trees
Faint wafted afar by the midnight breeze.

" I rose and like a panther crept
Into the camp, where lightly slept
Each dusky brave. I knew a breath
Perhaps might be the cause of death ;
But braving all I scorned to flee,

And inward vowed she should be free.
How to approach I hardly knew,
For fear she might with startled cry
  Arouse the camp,—I could but die ;
Yet life was sweet, and 'round me threw
A transient gleam of sunny hue ;
And the blest happiness that seems
  To come athwart a wand'ring life
  That has been nursed 'mid cruel strife ;
The wayward spirit of my dreams.

"Wild as it was, that tropic night
  Awoke within my storm-tossed breast
  The smould'ring flame of deep unrest ;
A fleeting vision soft and bright,—
Filling my soul with sweet delight.
My mother from the cloudless skies
  Seemed smiling on her erring son,
  For this one deed of kindness won
Respect at least from angels' eyes ;
Her arms outstretched with pleading hands,

And the wan smile that ghost-like bore,
The saintly happiness of yore,
That bound my soul 'neath silken bands.
An outlaw from my home and race,
The blinding drops suffused my face;
The first I'd shed in many years,
This scalding mist, this flood of tears;
Half-angry at the tender sign,
I brushed aside this mist of grief,
Seeking some cause to give relief,
And tried to steel this heart of mine;
Nearer I drew, one gesture made,
And she with a quick startled look
Glanced through the wild and dismal glade,
Scanning each vine-beclustered nook,
Fearful I thought for me alone
Those anxious glances outward thrown.

"With noiseless steps I reached her side
And severed the unconscious thongs,
Thinking meantime of vengeance, wrongs,

And all that did my life betide;
She slowly rose upon her feet,
  And graceful as the startled fawn,
  Her eyes pure as the early dawn,
Looked askance as *our* eyes did meet;
And then without one word or sign,
  Save what that one quick glance had told,
She quickly passed outside the line
  Of that wild race so fiercely bold.
I followed her with footsteps light,
  But scarce had passed their outer line
When limned against the star-lit night,
Half hid behind a trailing vine,—
Up sprang a brave with a wild yell
Whose echo through the forest fell,—
And roused the camp, a flash of fire,
  Mixed with a sharp and whip-like crack,
  The rifle sent upon our track
A vengeful ball of leaden wire;
Whoop answered whoop, the leaden hail
Fell thick and fast within the vale;
Thanks for the friendly aid of night

That hid us from their crafty sight.
"Straight as an arrow's course we sped
Until we reached the whisp'ring tide,
When up the stream she swiftly fled,
While I kept closely by her side;
We neared the spot where my canoe
Tossed gently on the waters blue;
While close upon our trail they came
Lit by the torch-light's lurid flame
The foremost trailers careless bore.

"'Lady,' I said, 'quick! my canoe
Lies here beside this winding shore,
Ready to cleave the dimpled blue
And take us from the rack and roar
Of savage war, far to a clime
Where the grim-visaged hand of Time
Will brush aside this night of woe.'

"Her eyes that shone like stars at night
Glared fiercely at the coming foe,

Then with a spring as soft and light
As ever fell the pure white snow,
She reached the boat and vaulted in
While 'round the light canoe did spin,
Sent by one deep stroke of the oar
As quick we glided from the shore ;
'Twas yet a mystery to me,
  Is now, how she should lightly flee
Unerring as the snow white dove
That carries messages of love
To friends afar, and rightly take
  The course to reach my bark canoe,
  And skim across the wavelets blue,
Leaving no trail to mark our wake.

" There must have been some higher pow'r
  Which aided us that weary night,
When through each dread and dismal hour,
  We bent our steps in hasty flight ;
My soul I know had breathed a pray'r,
And sure, I thought 'twas answer'd there,

Though agony could not have wrung
More anguish than around me hung,
At thought of her in bonds again,
A captive soul too full of pain.

"But o'er the dimpled waves we sped,
While in the East a streak of red
Gave warning of the coming dawn,
Whose tinted curtains, partly drawn,
Would soon reveal us to the foe
And thus recall *her* former woe ;
I could have made their numbers less,
But dared not seek the dread caress,
For that would surely guide them where
They soon could mock at our despair.

"Slowly the stars began to pale
Before the morning's gath'ring veil,
But then a sudden mist arose
And hid us from our savage foes.

I could have swooned for very joy
To think that she might yet be free
From foes that would her soul destroy,
Leaving her life a barren sea ;
Wild yells of rage now woke the gloom
Impenetrable as the tomb,
And echoed o'er the dancing waves
As if in mock'ry to the braves
Clustered upon the winding shore,
Eager to catch the slightest sound,
Ready to compass us around
And thus endanger life once more.

" We floated on while scarce one thought,
Save that of agony enwrought
Upon my soul in bands of fire,
Foretold the terrible desire
To crush once more my hated race ;
For crime like this could not efface
The many wrongs of my disgrace.
Revenge ! My spirit longed for this,

It might be bitter, but 'twas bliss
Compared with all this tide of woe,
These memories of long ago.

"A faint and slender stream of gold
Sifted amid the wat'ry bands
Of vapor, quietly enrolled,
Like shining threads on golden sands ;
The round, red sun in anger woke,
And rudely through the vapor broke,
Driving it onward here and there
Regardless of its wan despair,
Leaving the stream all nude and bare ;
I glanced across to either shore,
No painted features could I see,
The forest trees in grandeur bore
The same weird look of mystery ;
Astonished at this quietness
That seemed to savor strong of ill,
I watched the dancing wavelets press
Their way 'tween rock and wooded hill,

'Till she recalled me from my trance
And then I cast a backward glance ;
But not the sight of one red face
Nor speck of danger could I trace.
The very air, oppressive, still,
Produced no sign, scarce note of bird
The verdant forest arches stirred ;
It made my very blood run chill.
We neared the shore, the clinging vines
Lay purple in the dappled morn,
Glist'ning beneath the sun's red lines,
Upon the weary air upborne ;
Beneath their dark and broad green shade
I drew my light canoe on shore.
The trees with branches gray and hoar
A sweet delightful refuge made ;
We tarried not but onward sped,
She following where'er I led.
Again the shades of night came down
Shrouding the forest deep in brown ;
The voices of the night awoke,
And here and there their echoes broke ;

They rolled along beside the tide
Borne on the air in dreamy pride,
The distant wild and plaintive tone
Of night-birds wand'ring sad and lone
Made me feel very desolate,
And ready to meet any fate ;
At length we reached my forest home
Beneath the gray cliff's ample dome,
And we were safe, a while at least,
From these despoilers of the East.

" One day I saw far up the rocks
Two turtle doves with glist'ning locks,
Billing and cooing to themselves,
Happy as any forest elves ;
An arrow hurtled through the air
And only one of them was there,
The other lay dead at my feet,
So quiet, still, in Death's defeat.
A low sad moan broke on the air,
So wild, so full of deep despair,

That my hot blood grew chill and cold
And seemed to be so strangely old ;
A hand was laid upon my arm,
  A little brown and dusky hand,
  One born to love and to command,
A hand that had to me a charm ;
"'Poor bird ! sweet bird !' she dropped her head,
Kneeled down and gently raised the dead.
As yet I never dreamed of love,
The wail of that unmated dove
Awoke the passion in my breast
And from that hour I could not rest.

"She was a savage war-chief's child,
A blossom in that mountain wild,
Pure as the stars, and true as Night
Although her skin was far from white,
We loved and she became my bride,—
No priest the nuptials sanctified ;
None save the stars heard pledges giv'n
But they were registered in Heav'n.

Her name! but no, I must not tell,
'Twould not be using her full well
To have it tossed from mouth to mouth,
And carried by the zephyrs South

"Our bliss was short; one day there came
Just as the red sun cast a flame
Of gold across our pine-leaved hut,
A feather'd brave with a deep cut
Upon his arm, from which the blood
Poured slowly down, a deep red flood,
And seemed to waste his life away;
He stayed with us from day to day
Nursed by my dark-eyed Indian girl,
My sweet, wild, brown-faced forest pearl,
Until his ghastly wound was healed
And then departed from the field.

"A few days passed, when one wild night
I woke to see a ghastly sight;

Red flames were darting 'round my bed
And blazing torches overhead,—
Clasped in the brawny hands of those
Who were the authors of my woes,
And my sweet bride, my tropic flow'r
A senseless victim in their pow'r ;
But at her feet, bathed in his blood
  The traitor brave who brought them here,
  And he had paid, yes, very dear
For his deep, dark and treach'rous mood.

"I tried to spring upon my feet
  To fight for life and my brown bride,
But cruel bonds my flesh did eat.
  Misfortune bound me to her side :
Enough, they left me to my fate,
So weak and yet so desolate.

* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *

"I know I must have been insane,

For days and days my weary brain
Was in a wild and stormy whirl,
A restless, deep, uncertain swirl,
That made me wander here and there
A very child, I knew not where ;
It was mysterious to me
That I should be alive and free,
But stranger things than that have been
And stranger far are paths of sin,
Yes, paths that I have wander'd in.

" I stood within a grove of palm
That shed around a soothing balm
From od'rous flow'rs and creeping vines
That swung and hung from them in lines
Of purple, green and yellow threads ;
Twisted about and drew their heads,
Far up into the graceful trees,
Kissed by the mellow perfumed breeze ;
And at my feet a silver stream
That wander'd softly like a dream

Far out into the wild'ring maze,
That hid it from the sun's red blaze.
I sat me down upon a stone,
A sin-tossed waif, so weary, lone,
I cared for nothing, even life
Was but a bootless scene of strife
With horrid visions sadly rife;
Above, the sullen heavy whirr
Of wings the weary air did stir;
Below, a chipmonk's light shrill tones
Bounded from out the mossy stones,
And rolled along the am'rous vines,
Caught by the sunlight's fading lines;
And carried out beyond the trees,
Mixed with the soft sweet hum of bees
That drew from out the subtle flow'rs
The honeyed sweetness of the hours.

"The mantling shadows slowly crossed
The green surf fringes of the trees
That kissed the upper arch of seas,

Became inwove amid the clouds
Far in the distance, passion tossed,
And wrapped about with purple shrouds,
Their tangled brows blown full of stars,
A perfect wealth of rosy scars.
The frightened features of the moon
Blown from its rest so oversoon,
In trembling circles waded through
The star-gemmed arch of foamy blue ;
And hung suspended in the air
By her rich locks of golden hair.

" Before me on the dimpled stream
A white canoe with silver rim,
Slow wheeled across the moonbeam's dim ;
A breath from fringes of a dream.

" She stood with paddle in her hand,
Her face so weirdly white and still,
And eyes mysteriously chill ;

Around her brow a starry band
Of tinted, rosy golden stars,
That crept down from the azure bars.

"'Oh come! oh come!' she wildly cried,
And tossed her two white pleading hands
Across the sifted moonbeam's bands,
As if to woo me to her side;
Her words like rippled music spilled
  Upon the waves in sweet delight,
  Floated afar into the night
  Where blossomed roses hung in sight
And the blue waves of Heav'n filled;
'Why do you stay away so long?
I fear me that some hidden wrong
Has chained you 'neath its subtle spell,
Inwoven dreams that are not well.

"'They carried me across the sea
  And shut me in a gloomy tow'r:
  A wounded dove, and in their pow'r,

But liberty was not for me ;
I could not, would not be his bride ;
And with my outraged sense of pride
I spurned him as I would a snake ;
And then, and then, with eyes ablaze,
  Full of unholy passion's fire
  He sought to crush me with desire ;
Degrade me for his own vile sake,
So deep his soul in sinful ways.

" 'I sprang upon the castle's rim
  That overlooked the angry flood—
  So far below, it chilled my blood
And made my poor head strangely swim ;
I waved him back with dagger drawn
  And would have drove it to his heart,
  A jar—a creak—a sudden start,—
Then like a star shot from the dawn
I fell into the foaming sea,
Pure, sacred, as when torn from thee ;
Come to me now we both are free,
Oh come to me ! oh come to me !'

"I started up and would have gone
But something held me as a stone,
So far away her voice now seemed
That the blue fringes of the air
In waving lines that slowly streamed
And floated through her ghostly hair,
Smother'd the tones, and slowly hid
Beneath its soft and velvet lid,
The white canoe and spirit fair
Vanished amid the dreamy air;
No trace upon the waveless tide
Where I had seen my spirit bride.

* * * * * *

"To love and be beloved, what more
Of earthly bliss is there in store?
Can man, who once has felt its pow'r
Ask for a sweeter, holier dow'r?
I know not, deem not there is one
Beneath white fringes of the sun
Who has felt love's impassioned fire,

(Free from unnatural desire :—
Illicit intercourse that brings
Upon its sin-discolored wings
So many bitter, bitter stings ;)
But would be nobler, strive to win
Some recompense for years of sin ;
And seek where'er his footsteps strayed
A grander impulse, unbetrayed
By sordid passion's kindred strife
That saps the fairest hopes of life,
And wraps within its cank'rous arms
The shrinking victim of its charms.

"If dead sad memories are wove
With dreams of sweet undying love,
I grant you 'tis but bitter strife
Drawn from the wilderness of life ;
Nurtured amid a barren soil
From which the waves of Hope recoil ;
Like to a sail at dead of night
Driven amid the breakers white,

Tossed here and there, her crumbling deck
Ere long the semblance of a wreck ;
Or like the dove whose mate has gone
Becomes so weary, sad and lone,
Broods deeply in the feather'd fir,
Slow pines away and dreads to stir ;
Remaining true to its first love,
  True as the moon who wings her flight
  'Tween blossomed stars whose golden light
Swings through the blue bent arch above ;
'Till death envelopes in its shroud
The beauty that was once so proud.

" The heart of man is strangely formed,
For good or ill it matters not,
  In *all* there is some hidden spot
Where tender feelings once have warmed ;
There is so much of sin and strife
Blown out upon the sea of life,
Mixed with the pure and truly good
And told in variable mood,—

By those who seem so truly pure,
And strong and able to endure
The odium they cast at those,
Regardless of their victim's woes;
I hesitate, and dare not find
  Nor seek to know where good is true,
For fear I may misjudge the mind
  And ever thus my judgment rue.

* * * * * *

"Enough; mine was no coward's heart
To bend at will and break at ease,
To kneel and cringe at ev'ry breeze
A sense of vengeance might impart;
But with a last look at the wave,
  I set my teeth and turned away
  Into the forest chill and gray,
So chill it savored of the grave.
I wander'd on until the moon,
A-weary from her lonely beat
Blew out her candle oversoon,

And drew away her tresses sweet
From underneath my weary feet ;
And then the soughing of the wind
  Amid the branches of the trees
  Proclaimed that angry, fretted seas
Of storm-tossed clouds were close behind.
I hurried on but lost the path,
  My wild heart seared and counter-crossed,
  Cut deep with sin and passion-tossed,
Scarce heeded the fierce whirlwind's wrath ;
Splashes of rain like drops of blood,
  Lit by the red-tongued lightning's glare,
Waltzed downward in an angry mood
  And swung into the palm tree's hair ;
A driving scud of silver mist
The moaning earth in anger kissed ;
And wild bent clouds with caps of fire
Sailed onward in tumult'ous ire ;
Their black hair driven through the air,
Tangled and hung in dark despair ;
The shiv'ring trees with broken arms,
Tossed by the whirlwind's subtle charms

In vengeful fury to the earth,
Wept tears of anguish at its birth.

"The way grew more and more obscure,
  Tall mountains reared their flinty heads
  From out their storm-bewilder'd beds,
Half-frightened though they stood secure.
At length a cavern I espied
Cut deep into the mountain side;
That tow'r'd above a raging stream,
Lit by the lurid lightning's gleam;
And into it I blindly rushed,
  Just as a tree came toppling down
  From off the mountain's outer crown
With savage swoop, and rudely brushed
A show'r of rocks and broken soil
  Across its mouth, and nearly shut
  Me in this black and flinty hut,
Safe from the element's turmoil.

"I laid down on the stony floor

Exhausted from my weary beat,
And sank into a slumber sweet
Regardless of the tempest's roar.
How long I slept I never knew,
But with a trembling sense of dread,
(A feeling undefined that grew
Around my soul and slowly spread
Its weary folds about my bed,)
I woke but dared not stir for fear
Of some alarming danger near ;
And soon I heard a creeping sound
Slow gliding o'er the rocky ground ;
A sound that made my blood run chill,
My very being coldly thrill.
And then a slimy object drew
Its clammy folds across my face
And wound itself upon my breast ;
And what it was I scarcely knew,
Nor could I in the blackness trace
This horrid monster of unrest.

" Its weight I thought would crush me quite,

So stifling was the sense of pain
That rushed into my heated brain ;
How I did long for morning's light,
So that some plan I might devise
To rid me of this horrid weight,
Before I fell a sacrifice
To this strange monster's brutal hate.

" Three times it brushed across my face,
My very flesh with loathing crept ;
Great drops of grave-like moisture wept,
Leaving behind a sick'ning trace ;
A flash of light'ning pierced the cave,
And then, oh Heav'n ! the horrid sight !
A monstrous boa coiled upright
Upon my breast, and like a wave
Its curved head tossed from side to side,
And swung about in conscious pride.

" I think I must have swooned away,
For when my senses full returned

That pressing weight no longer burned
Into my brain, the shadows gray ;
Pointed their fingers slow away
Before the still approach of day,
And I so weaker far than they,
Crawled out upon the storm bent sod
And tossed some things far up to God.

* * * * * *

" Far on a foreign shore was I
Beneath a dreamy ev'ning's sky ;
And looming out above the wave
A castle reared its features grave ;
A tall stern pile of chiselled stone
On which the pale moon's hair was thrown.
I knew it was the place where she
Who was full all the world to me,
Had died, had given her pure heart
To Him who knew she suffer'd much,
But who would not allow the touch
Of sin her features to impart.

"I saw a light far in the tow'r,
A light that drifted softly down
And spread apart the shadows brown ;
And knew that 'ere another hour
He would be surely in my pow'r,
And I could then avenge her death ;
What rapture hung upon my breath,
At thought of all my heavy wrongs
Wiped out in blood and smoke and fire,
What more of Hate could I desire,
To punish sin where sin belongs ?

"No sound save where the muffled call
Of waves upon the ragged coast,
Like whisp'rings of a restless ghost,
Tossed from a distant waterfall,—
Awoke the silence mantled there,
The dreamy stillness of the air ;
What thoughts coursed through my sinful breast,
A restless, wild, uncertain strife,
Plucked from the ashes of a life

That since my boyhood knew no rest ;
It may have been through over-zeal,
  That my wild heart, its meed of hate
  Drawn onward by unyielding fate,
  Refused to sanction till too late
The tenderness it would reveal.

"The white still moon slow waded on,
  Trailing her tresses in the sea ;
But of all star-fires there were none
  So lovely, chaste and pure as she.
The stars set in the brow of night
  Tossed their soft fringes through the air,
  So delicate and purely fair,
'Twould sure have charmed an anchorite ;
But what were nights like this to me,
  Who scarcely cared for anything
  Since she was gone, save what might bring
The vengeance I so longed to see.

" A wealth of trailing vines were bent

In twisted course across the walls,
Peeped into gorgeous rooms and halls,
And a far milder lustre lent
To the cold, chill and stately pile,
On which the pale moon tossed a smile.

"Concealed amid the tangled shade
I softly drew myself along;
The fretted waves with sullen song,
A weird and wild refrain had laid
Across the dim and drowsy air,
Full sweet and chaste as any pray'r
That fills the arch of Heav'n with song;
Where white-winged angels softly swing,
And glide so dreamily along,
Like breath of flow'rs in scented spring.

"Through winding halls and stately rooms
I flitted like a silent ghost,
Some weary spirit that is lost;

Whose soul upon a barren coast
Revels amid deserted tombs,
A very wand'ring Ishmaelite,
With features set and still as night."

"I stole my way into his room
And placed a dagger to his heart ;
Struck deep, and whisper'd low of doom,
And laughed to see the life-drops start ;
And taunted him of early days,
Bade him repent his brutal ways,
And all the time his ebbing life
Was wasting slow and sure away.
His glazing eyes full soon were rife
With Death's destructive sullen ray ;
And I, with long drawn sigh of joy,
Tossed a red torch upon the walls,
And soon the tessellated halls
Were red and heated to destroy ;
And far beyond its angry blaze,
I, seated on a mossy stone,

Heard issue forth a weary groan,
And saw beyond the murky haze
Wide streaming banners cross the sky,
The same as late were hung on high,
The bright aurora of the sky;
And she upon its streaming hair
Bent lowly down as if in pray'r,
And now—"
"Yes, now you die!" and shrill
A voice broke on the star-lit air,
It boded naught to him save ill,
Nor gave him chance to breathe a pray'r.
"We know you with your bloody hands,
You Nazarene of many lands:
Die! murd'rer of my master, die!"
A flash of fire, a gleam of steel,
A bitter sigh, a sudden reel,
And earth blushed red beneath the sky.

THE GORGE, 1866.

Mizpah.

There is a void . . . . . a dreary void,
That time nor change can e'er bridge o'er ;
It is with Dead Sea fruit alloyed
And never known to blossom more.

The dead are faithful . . . . . always true ;
The living . . . . . man may be betrayed,
Clasp Sorrow's hand, and thus embue
His choicest longings deep in shade.
So as it was . . . . . the past is dead :
The future, still to grief is . . . . . wed.

There is a weariness that brings
A deep unbroken chain of fears,
Bearing upon its subtle wings
The frosts of many dismal years.

Mizpah.

I

Yes, be it so! you seek release
From vows you pledged me o'er and o'er,
The seal is set . . . . . I wish you peace;
But . . . . . Heav'n seems farther than before.
Go, you are free, why must I stay
Where I must feel that sense of woe,
Where mem'ry haunts me ev'ry day
With its delusive glow?
For words sound cold and meaningless
When uttered by a cheerless heart;
And tongues of fire cannot express
Its counterpart.

II.

Farewell . . . . . a word that's lightly said
And easily forgot by some ;
While others know that hope is dead,
And in their anguish lips are dumb.
I could not speak that one sad word,
It breathes, alas, too much of pain ;
The saddest ear has ever heard,
Will often hear again.
For even in the midnight hours
When seated in my quiet room,
There steals with perfume from the flowers
A breath of doom.

III.

If in the busy marts of men,
There comes a thought of future bliss—
I crush it back, for even then
I know that life is . . . . . nothingness.
That hope is as a transient snare,
Full of the Dead Sea fruit of years,

Leaving behind a world of care,
  Its countless hopes and fears.
A void . . . . . a deep, drear, matchless void,
  Recumbent on a sea of space ;
Mixed with some hopes . . . . . hopes now destroyed—
  And her dear face.

IV.

What recks it now? I care not where
The waves of fortune leave me here;
I only know that Heav'n's pure air
Is breathed by one I hold so dear ;
That Time can never bring relief
To hearts that know so much of grief.

V.

I do not know whose was the blame ;
I would that it might be my own,
And I can bear with cold disdain

The tide of ill around me thrown ;
For life and love, and hearts that . . . . . bleed,
Can suffer more if there is need.

VI.

I love you ! is not that enough ?
Do not those words tell you the whole ?
I cannot give you stronger proof
For they are written on my soul ;
Yet now . . . . . perhaps it is a crime,
And some . . . . . are lonely for all time.

VII.

Sometimes when stars shine in the sky
And wings the night birds on their track,
With wild and ever plaintive cry,
And shadows slowly draw aback
Before the marble Queen of Night,
Whose glances shroud the earth in white.

VIII.

When Heav'n seems purer, and the air
Filled with the perfumed wine of flow'rs,
Stands ready, waiting for a pray'r,
While slowly hang the weary hours ;
Then you may come and say, " His love
Was pure and true as stars above."

IX.

And then, " Why did I toss aside
The fondest, truest heart on earth ?
I, who might once have been his bride
And basked forever by his hearth ;
His love is mine, *all* mine ! and yet
Such love as his can ne'er forget."

X.

To know and feel that this is so,
This utter loneliness of heart,

This deep and pressing sense of woe,
The future always must impart;
I could not, would not, wish them less,
Your years of future happiness.

XI.

Perhaps you'd wish that there had been
Less of that pure, true tenderness,
As such, it was my only sin,
And loving so could it be less,
I know that Heav'n is very fair,
And Hope . . . . . alas! it is despair.

XII.

I blame you not, it is for me,
This deep corroding sense of pain;
God knows I could not think of thee,
As passing through such trials again;
Yet words may seem all calm and cold,
Though true and pure as virgin gold.

XIII.

I watch the shadows as they creep
Across the mount, o'er brake and lea ;
I watch the white stars kiss the deep,
And see no sign of love for me ;
A broken shrine . . . . . an unfilled tomb,
What more . . . . . except a cruel doom.

XIV.

I toss my two white hands across
A broken space of life to you ;
And you who know me truly true
Refuse to lift my weary cross.

XV.

I pass me on and make no sign,
I have been taught that God is good,
And know though all his chast'ning mood
You *once* have been, yes, truly *mine*.

XVI.

I cover up the all I lose,
The all that might have made life fair,
Nor seek for hope amid despair,
I follow where I do not choose.

XVII.

Christ knows that I would not betray—
So sacred pure, one thought of thine
That in the past was wholly mine,
And now . . . . . His will I must obey.

XVIII.

I wish you years of future bliss,
So much more happier than I ;
Years that may never cause a sigh,
A life long round of . . . . . happiness.

XIX.

I feel at times your mind will be
(Because it cannot help but stray)
With one whose thoughts are all with thee,
And thinking thus your heart will say—
"O would that he had loved me less,
For there might come forgetfulness."

XX.

Could it be pride that wrought this ill?
But no, I must not thus complain;
No Christian woman would thus kill
A love nursed 'mid the waves of pain;
Unknown its nobleness, its pow'r
Grew stronger, fonder, ev'ry hour.

XXI.

And I was strong, and you were mine,
And absence made me love you more

If that could be . . . . you drew the line
That left me on that barren shore ;
And life, and love, and future years
Grow faint beneath a mist of fears.

XXII.

I carry now your last sweet kiss,
Perhaps 'tis that keeps me from sin ;
There is a savage joy in this,
Though thinking still . . . . . what might have been ;
The tide rolls onward to the sea,
Bringing no love, no Heav'n to me.

XXIII.

God keep you pure and strong to do ;
God grant that happiness be thine ;
And may thy wishes all prove true,
Not broken . . . . . like these hopes of mine.

The autumn comes—the earth is sere,
The Night of Life draws slowly near.

XXIV.

Not spouseless I—though all alone,
There is a mem'ry I have wed ;
Chill, cold, a fragment born of stone,
A life unsought—a vision dead ;
'Tis all that I shall ever know
Of love or happiness . . . . . below.

XXV.

Sweet eyes that once looked love to mine,
Dear heart that once was all my own,
Pure thoughts whose holiness were thine,
In dreams I claim them, mine alone.
Fond dreams ! but oh, it is not well !
It savors, ah, too much of Hell.

XXVI.

Life's ways are devious and wild,
And strange sad thoughts run riot there ;
Many a weary soul beguiled
Has need of mother's fervent pray'r.
True heart ! true soul ! what better friend
Could Christ in confidence e'er send ?

XXVII.

I watch the sky, its sea of blue,
The clouds that kiss its azure lips,
I watch the stars and know them true,
Though sometimes 'neath a dark eclipse :
The soul of honor, faith and light,
They cling unto their mistress—Night.

XXVIII.

Hope, what is it ? no more, no less
Than some wild fancy of the brain ;

Delusive, born of bitterness,
Nourished amid a sea of pain :
A phantom never knowing rest,
A torture to the truest breast.

XXIX.

Your lightest wish was law to me,
  But now I dare not seek your side,
Although my heart . . . . . still turns to thee,
  And you may never be my bride.
What joy ! what bliss ! could I awake
  And find it but a cruel dream ;—
And know that just for your sweet sake
  I breasted this sad stream :
And that you would be *mine* again,
  Mine to protect through good or ill,
To never know a care or pain
  That I might fill.

XXX.

If sometime you should hear of one
  Who sings sad songs, and roameth far
In lands beneath a tropic sun,
  Where orange groves and spices are ;
You'll know that he is *very* lone,
  His soul beneath a weary spell,
A ban around his heart is thrown,
  And yet it is not well.
And you will sigh maybe, and say,
  " Come weal or woe, come storm or shine,
His pure, true love—each hour—each day—
  Is wholly *mine*!"

XXXI.

'Tis done! 'tis finished! I obey!
  I tread the path marked out for me,
I follow on 'till close of day,
  Without one star to light Life's sea.

I see the weary moon drift out
  Upon a space of tinted gold ;
Remorseless, calm, without one doubt,
  Its features white and cold.
I would my spirit could be there,
  Afar from mem'ry of your smiles,
Borne onward through the realms of air . . . . .
  To Heav'n's isles.

ADIRONDACKS, 1873.

Mine.

Amid the cycles of a past,
Replete with deep affection's tide,
Like ghostly fancies overcast,
Come years of bitterness allied.
Oblations poured from Mis'ry's shrine,
To spirits of a weary line.

Mine.

I.

My heart broods o'er a coffined lid :
The truest, purest, best of all,
Is in its narrow limits hid ;
And I, ... well, life seems all of gall,
More bitter far than anything,
The saddest morsel Time can bring.

II.

There is a grief too deep for tears,
A wild, corroding sense that eats
Full deep into the heart, and sears
The soul, where gladness seldom beats.

It is a grief that none may know,
Save those whose hearts are full of woe.

III.

Sweet, sainted mother, truly mine;
Your boy whose breast is full of woe,
Who loved you deeply, purely *so*,
Bends low beside a broken shrine.

IV.

The blue bent sky so full of stars,
A wild uncertain light sends down
Upon the mantled earth of brown,
Blown full of deep volcanic scars.

V.

Do angels weep? Do angels grieve?
Full soon there comes so much of dread,

Full much—full more. Can I believe
My darling one lies cold and dead?
Lies still and white . . . . . so better far
Than I . . . . . beneath a baleful star.

VI.

Christ is a mystery—a breath,
A holy dream—a pure sweet trust,
Whose promises are truly just;
But why, oh *why*, did He bring death?

VII.

I would that tears of mine might flow,
Strive though I may they will not come;
My very soul seems coldly dumb,
So bitter, deep, this cruel woe.

VIII.

O loving smiles that all for me,
Awoke within my breast such bliss,
A love far deeper than the sea,
And pure as any angel's kiss :
Inwoven dreams full bright and fair,
As rainbows braided in the air.

IX.

O sweet, pure lips, all voiceless now,
Kissed into silence—sadly mute—
By the pale angel's cold salute,
Christ help me bear this woe, somehow!

X.

O white, still hands ;—soft folded o'er
A fond, true breast—when living—beat
With all of tenderness complete,
That I shall see on earth no more.

XI.

O tender eyes, whose loving rays
Deep veiled beneath the lifeless lids,
No more shall light the weary days,
Sleep, sweetly, softly, Christ forbids
That you shall come . . . . . your vigil's o'er,
Sleep, gently sleep, ... to weep no more.

XII.

And I, *so* lonely—Memory
Brings from the ashes of a past,
Fruits of a dead and arid sea:
Twin hopes so rudely crushed at last.
Folded full deep within my breast,
I can but wish I was at rest.

JANUARY 5, 1874.

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